

THE JESSE JAMES STORIES

A WEEKLY DEALING WITH THE DETECTION OF CRIME

issued weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 28.

Price, Five Cents.



A FREE FIGHT FOLLOWED, JERRY, THE TOAD, SIDING WITH THE TWO OUTLAWS, AND FIGHTING LIKE A DEMON.—(CHAPTER LXLII.)

THE JESSE JAMES STORIES

A WEEKLY DEALING WITH THE DETECTION OF CRIME

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1901, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.

No. 28.

NEW YORK, November 16, 1901.

Price Five Cents.

Jesse James' Exploits.

By W. B. LAWSON.

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

TREACHERY.

"Halt! Another step and you are a dead man!"

The order is given in a thrilling whisper, but the terrible words are greeted by a burst of laughter.

Then comes the flash and crack of a weapon and the speaker stands weaponless. The bullet from his opponent's forty-two caliber revolver has knocked his weapon from his fingers.

"Ha! ha! ha! So you thought you had me cornered, did you?" laughed the man with the advantage.

The words were spoken hardly above a whisper.

"I did, but I see that I am mistaken," said the other. "You are a quick hand at the trigger, Jesse James!"

"I ought to be by this time. Now, then, up with your hands, you whelp! I'll deal with you later when I have explained that shot to our friends yonder."

The man who was covered put up his hands obe-

diently, and then the notorious bandit sent his voice ringing through the bushes.

"Lost him, by thunder! The moonlight makes things uncertain, boys! The track was a catamount, and its taken to the hills yonder."

"Better shoot at a target, pardner!" came back, in a laughing voice. Then, as the explanation had been satisfactory, Jesse James smiled grimly at his quarry.

"You're a clever rascal, Jesse James," said the other, in a low voice. "I wish I had half your nerve."

The speaker was a young man with a smooth, handsome face and a pair of dark eyes that were as keen as an eagle's.

The other was a man of Herculean proportions, who wore a fierce red goatee and mustache.

This man was known and dreaded throughout the entire West, for crime and bloodshed always followed his footsteps.

Jesse James once seen could never be mistaken.

were it not for his cleverness in disguising both his form and features.

"You're deucedly polite for a sneak," he remarked, as he moved a step nearer. "I reckon you won't be so civil when you know what I am going to do with you!"

The young man shrugged his shoulders as if indifferent to his fate, but in reality he was only trying to gain time by keeping the outlaw talking.

"It's an easy guess to know what my fate will be, Jesse James. You have murdered men before and you will not hesitate to stain your soul with crime again. But you dare not shoot me here—of that I am certain."

He glanced around as he spoke, and his gaze swept the horizon. In the distance turned the peaks of the Mormon Range Mountains, and near at hand the water of the Moapa River shone in the moonlight.

The outlaw and his victim, who was a Pinkerton detective, had met accidentally in a prospecting camp and each had become aware of the other's identity not five minutes before the first words chronicled here were uttered.

Fifty feet from where they stood behind a clump of trees the canvas was spread for a party of twenty.

It was early in the eighties and the famous Comstock mines were in full operation, and these men were fired with the mining fever.

They were all experienced miners, but their hope was to find a fresh vein, stake a claim and become owners, rather than employees for the big corporation.

As the detective, whose name was Will Star, swept the landscape with his glance, his brain was filled with a peculiar ambition.

If he should shout to these men that Jesse James was in their midst it would probably mean the death of the outlaw.

But there was one objection to this proceeding.

Jesse James still held his finger upon the trigger of his pistol, and the first cry from his lips would send him to eternity.

He concluded not to sacrifice his life just yet, and once more attempted to take up the outlaw's attention.

"Do you know who I am, Jesse James?" he said.

"Ha! ha! ha! Why shouldn't I know, when you trailed me all over creation? Your name is Will Star, and you're from the Pinkerton agency! Not the first bloodhound those whelps have put on the track of Jesse James, either!"

The outlaw was growing excited in his speech, which was just what the detective wanted.

He hoped to get him so angry that he would forget his caution. Above all things he desired him to forget to listen.

"We'll catch you yet, Jess! You can't always escape! The man who puts a bullet through your heart will be a public benefactor, to say nothing of securing that ten thousand from the Government!"

The words were spoken softly, but with telling effect.

The outlaw's eyes flashed fire, and his face grew livid.

"Maledictions upon them! They shall never catch me! No man ever yet drew a bead on Jesse James, and I would die by my own hand rather than let any one imprison me!"

There was a crackling in the bushes at these last words, but, as the detective had hoped, Jesse did not hear it.

"Curse the whelps!" he went on. "They may trail me all they want to! It only means one less of the dogs every time they cross my track!"

He stood erect as he spoke, and for a second it looked to Star as if he meant to pull the trigger, yet he restrained his desire to warn the others.

"Hold, Jesse James! Drop that weapon!" ordered a voice at that instant, and a revolver flashed and cracked from behind the bushes.

A yell followed, and the man in ambush came crashing into the tiny clearing.

Some one had knocked the weapon in his hand so that the bullet sped by the outlaw's head without touching him.

The next second another form emerged from the bushes.

"Quick, Jess! Pepper the fellow and bolt!" said the newcomer, in a low voice.

"The camp has just found out who we are, and the whole outfit will side with the detectives!"

Star did not wait for this speech to be finished, but made a leap to shelter.

He was too late to escape the outlaw's bullet, however, and a flesh wound in the shoulder made him groan with agony.

There was just strength enough left in him to answer the cries of the men in the tents, and then began a scouring of the bushes.

Lawrence Davis, the chum and brother detective of Star, dragged himself to his feet and went at once to the aid of his companion.

"After him, men! The fellow was Jesse James!" cried Star, faintly.

"And the other fellow was his brother, Frank!" added Davis. "Curse them! We've traveled with them two days and didn't know 'em!"

"Honors were even, then, I reckon! seein' as how they didn't know you!" chuckled one of the men.

A cry from the banks of the Moapa came over the bushes:

"Here he is, the rascal! He's swimming for his life! Pepper him, boys! Fill his head with bullets the next time it comes to the surface!"

Davis had bandaged his friend's shoulder and led him to one of the tents, then joined the group of men on the bank of the river.

"Where is he now, boys?" was his first question, as he scanned the moonlit water.

"Hang it! he's disappeared! He went down when I yelled! I reckon he's either drowned himself or is playin' possum!"

"No fear of his drownin' himself! Jess can swim as well under water as above it! Take care of my chum, boys; I'm going after the scoundrel! If I don't come back, notify the Pinkerton agency, at Chicago."

There was a splash in the water, and the brave de-

tective struck out, holding his pistol between his teeth, so as not to wet it.

As he swam away, the group on the bank looked at each other in amazement.

They had made two startling discoveries in a minute.

"Jumpin' sandhills! who'd 'a' thought it?" exclaimed one of them, after a minute.

"I reckon we've had a narrer escape, boys! That thar robber has been in our company fer forty-eight hours, an' we never so much as guessed it! That's one on us, an' a good one, too! I reckon we'd better go back an' start over ag'in, pardners! Ef we ain't tenderfeet, I'll eat my boots!"

"There they go! There's Jess in ther lead! I reckon that's his brother behind him!" yelled another, as two forms suddenly emerged from the river upon the opposite bank.

At that same instant, the detective elevated his head and shoulders above the water.

Crack!

Crack!

The revolver in his hands spoke twice, and one of the forms on the opposite bank was seen to stagger.

The next second Jesse James wheeled around, and the moonlight flashed on his pistol barrel.

Crack!

A bullet sped along the surface of the water in a straight line for the detective.

There was another splash, and the swimmer disappeared.

At the same moment the James brothers were lost to view in the bushes upon the opposite bank of the river.

The group of prospectors waited until the moon dropped behind a cloud and the face of the water was bathed in shadow.

Then they returned to the tents, shaking their heads solemnly.

Star turned pale when he heard of his companion's fate; then, as a clear, birdlike whistle came over the water, his eyes flashed brightly.

"Safe! Davis is safe! He must have ducked!

He's after Jess, no doubt! I wish to Heaven I was with him!"

"Snakes and crocodiles! It was Jess all right, pard. Hanged if ther rascal ain't stole my specie bag! There was a thousand in nuggets! A million curses on the hellyun!" yelled some one.

"Mine's gone, too! A couple of thousand in dust! Curse ther thief!" shouted another.

"He's cleaned us out, boys! My gold bar is gone! It was wuth five thousand!"

The men looked at each other this time with grim, determined faces.

CHAPTER XC.

A MURDERER'S DEED.

From that minute all thought of further prospecting was forgotten.

Ten thousand dollars reward had been offered by the Government for Jesse James, dead or alive, and this, together with the amount the outlaw had just stolen, was incentive enough for the miners to follow him.

In an hour the tents were down, and a horse apiece saddled and bridled.

The outlaws were on foot, so the chances were in their favor, but at the very last minute Blink Carson discovered something.

There was not a horse in the camp that was in condition to travel.

They had been dosed with something that made them useless at the very minute when they were needed.

"Reckon we'd better pitch tents ag'in, Blink! Thar ain't no tellin' when we'll start now!" said Bob Burnside, an ex-cowboy.

"Hark! There's some one coming, men! Look out!" yelled Star, suddenly.

"Thet thar's right, stranger, and thar ain't no grass growin' under their feet, nuther!" said Blink, straining his eyes across the bushes.

"No sane hoss ever went like thet! It mout be

one o' Squire Wigginses' men——" began Bob, when a shrill cry reached them.

"Help! help! murder! Help!"

The cry was prolonged into a wail and there was a great crashing in the bushes.

"It's a woman! Help her, men!" yelled Star, at the top of his lungs.

"Great snakes! He's right! It's Squire Wiggins' darter!" shouted Blink, jerking his weapon from his belt, "and, by the dancin' devils, it's an Injun!"

The two riders were in plain sight now, although the semi-darkness distorted their figures, and the girl's spirited horse shied and nearly threw her.

"On, Firefly! On, boy! Help! Help!" cried the girl again.

The next second she gave a little scream of delight, and then tried desperately to rein in the mustang that she was riding.

"Let Firefly go, Meg! You kin come back later!" roared Blink, darting out into the narrow trail. "I'll stand between you an' thet yaller rattlesnake!"

The girl dashed on, sawing on her mustang's bridle and finally bringing it to its haunches, but the Indian who was pursuing her had stopped some distance behind her.

"Come on, you varmint! Let me clap an eye on you!" bawled Blink Carson, excitedly, as he stood in the path, shaking his fist at the redskin.

"Are you all right, miss?" asked Star, as soon as the girl came back.

The young girl was almost breathless, but her fine black eyes snapped fire as she answered:

"He started chasing me at the big rock just at the end of the corral, and this is as near as he has been to me any time. I wasn't afraid of his catching Firefly, only I don't know the way, and I knew papa would worry! Are you sure, sir, that he is really an Indian?"

"Ef paint and feathers make er redskin, he's one," broke in Blink. "Cuss the skunk! He's gone back without givin' me a chance at him! Thar he is now, on the knoll, er bendin' his head ter listen!"

"Keep him there a minute, till Bob gets near him!"

said Star, quickly; then he made a trumpet of his hands and yelled at the fellow:

"Whoop! Hi, there! Come back! Me treat to firewater! Scalps! Heap much wampum!"

There was no answer from the fellow, who was outlined against the sky, but in a second he raised his head that was ornamented with feathers.

"Hark! A signal!" cried Star, as a shrill cry echoed over the hill and valley.

There was not a sound, and after a minute the signal was repeated. Then from the shadows on the opposite side of the Moapa there came the same note.

It was faint and muffled at first, but unmistakably a signal.

"There's a mystery in this," whispered Star, as he listened; "I'll bet my boots he is signaling Jesse James!"

Crack!

Bang!

There was a flash of light on the knoll and the feathered head suddenly dropped to the saddle.

Crack!

Crack!

The first shot was answered and another followed it, then Bob Burnside let out a whoop that would have done credit to a whole band of Indians.

"Hi, thar! Hurry up, Blink! 'Tain't an Injun. It's a white man!" he yelled.

"I'll tell you who it is," said Star, as he reached the spot in the same saddle with Miss Wiggins. "It's Black Foot, a half-breed, who belongs to the James gang! The fellow escaped from the jail at Aurora last week! That settles it, men! Jesse James is not alone in Nevada! He's got both his brother and his gang with him."

"I reckon this feller won't make much more trouble! He's as dead as a pickled coyote! Thet was a good shot, Burnside!" said Blink, coming up. "Now, then, one on us has got ter see this young lady home, an' I 'low will be doin' wrong ter leave ther horses er minute."

"I'll see ther lady home if she's willin'," spoke up Tom Wetheby, the youngest prospector of the lot.

Miss Wiggins glanced down shyly from her saddle and blushed very prettily.

"I reckon it's safe for me to go back alone, gentlemen," she began, demurely. "It's only a mile to the ranch, and no doubt pa will be looking for me."

"Thet don't make no diff ter us, miss," broke in Carson, grandly; "this hyar's a camp of honest men, an' I 'low thet one on us is goin' to take yer home!"

In a second Tom was in the saddle, with the young lady behind him, and the mustang started back through the bushes.

"Reckon ther squire'll lend yer a horse ter come back on, Tom," said Blink. "Any time after daylight will do! Tain't nec'ry ter hurry!"

He winked at Star as he spoke, and the detective smiled pleasantly. Miss Wiggins was safe with Tom, and that was all he wanted.

The men made their way back to the clearing and took another look at the horses.

They were doing all right and would be on their feet by daylight. Ten minutes later the tents were up again.

A sentry was stationed outside and a guard was left with the horses. Star's shoulder was rebandaged and he was made as comfortable as possible.

Then the balance of the camp turned in for some slumber.

An hour later they were aroused by a cry of alarm.

Tom Wetherby was on the knoll, making a megaphone of his hands, and the message he shouted at them drove all sleep from their eyelids.

"Quick, boys! The squire's ranch is on fire! Jesse James has killed the old man and stolen his horses!"

Blink Carson yelled back an answer and then started in to prod up the horses.

By throwing buckets of river water over them he aroused them from their stupor.

Star joined in the race to the ranch, in spite of his bad shoulder, and the scene that greeted him when he reached there made him almost forget that he was injured.

"They've made a clean sweep of it, curse 'em!" roared Blink, as the cavalcade of rescuers clattered down the last hill and saw the flames bursting from the roofs of the ranchhouse and stables.

"That Injun was at the bottom of this! He give that thar signal just to fool us, Blink," said Tom, who was before them at the gate. "Jess was back across the river and half-way ter ther ranch afore the rascal chased the gal! Thet thar answer ter ther signal was only an echo!"

A rush was made toward the burning buildings, but nothing could be done except to see the place burn to ashes.

When the fire commenced to die down, Tom led the whole group back to a dugout in the rocks, where Meg Wiggins was weeping over the dead body of her father.

"We got hyar jest in time ter drag him out er ther house yonder," he said, grimly. "But ther young lady says thar was some men on the place, and I reckon thar ain't so much left of ther hull bunch as er woman could put in er silver thimble."

"Reckon we'd better take the girl over the hills ter ther Pancake Diggin's—there's women folks thar thet will take care of her," said Blink, thoughtfully.

Miss Wiggins raised her head at these words, and her eyes flashed angrily.

"No! Oh, no! I don't want to go to the diggins, Mr. Carson!" she said, quickly. "I want to follow up that scoundrel, Jesse James, and bring him to justice! I can ride as well as any of you! Do please take me with you!"

Blink looked puzzled for a minute, and was shaking his head undecidedly, when Star broke in:

"Let her come with us, boys! We can take care of her all right! When she is sick of her bargain, she can go to ther diggin's!"

The girl gave him a grateful look, and then put her hand in Tom Wetherby's.

"Tom will take care of me," she said, simply. "There's no one else now."

"You bet I will, little girl!" was the young man's surprising answer.

The men now scoured around over the ranch, but saw nothing living; then, beginning with the hoof-prints nearest to the stables, they tracked them for a little distance.

"They've taken to the woods yonder, an' I 'low they're makin' fer Rattlesnake Trail," said one of the men, coming back to report.

"Then we'll take ther squire's body over the trail as fur as ther diggin's," said Blink Carson, promptly. "The gal will want ter see him buried most likely, and, as it is right on our way, we kin do it easy."

"We'd orter have two more horses ter do thet," said Tom, reflectively.

Star and Bob Burnside settled that question by giving up their horses and deciding to remain in the dugout until Blink sent some one back for them.

Before daylight the party set out for the diggings, and Star and Bob took turns in watching the smoking ash heaps from the door of the dugout. An hour before daylight Bob, who was on guard, touched Star upon the arm and at the same time he gave a warning whisper.

"Sh! Ther James boys have lost something valuable, and have come back to find it. There's three of 'em skulkin' in the shadows yonder."

Star was on his feet in a second and peering out of the door, and just then the three shadows came a little nearer.

"It's Jess and Frank and some other robber," he whispered. "I'd know Jess anywhere!"

"Sh! Listen!"

Bob put his finger to his lips, and just then Jesse James' voice reached them.

He was speaking softly, as if he feared an enemy might be lurking near him.

"Hold on, Frank! Don't go too near that rock yonder! There's a dugout over there, and some of the whelps may be in it!"

"I don't think so, Jess! We killed every man on the premises, and the gang we overhauled in the woods yonder numbered eighteen, not counting the girl or the stiff on the litter."

"There should be twenty, not counting the sleuths," was Jesse James' answer.

The cowboy gritted his teeth and clutched his weapon more firmly.

"If 'twarn't fer your shoulder now, I'd say pepper 'em an' take the chances," he growled savagely. "We've got to do it, anyway! The devils are coming this way!" said Star, quickly. "Quick, Bob! Help me load my weapon! There's an empty chamber, and my fingers are stiff! Now, Jesse James! Come on, you fiend! If I don't put a bullet through your heart, it'll be because my skill fails me!"

He dropped to one knee as he spoke and Bob, after loading the empty chamber, took his place beside him. In a second more the shadow of one of the outlaws fell across the dugout.

CHAPTER XCI.

A THRILLING ENCOUNTER.

Crack!

Bang!

Thud!

A flash of light from the dugout door blinded the fellow, and before he could wheel about two bullets struck him squarely in the temple.

There was a snort from his mount, and the animal darted ahead, leaving its rider stone dead on the ground before the dugout.

A low shout from Jesse James followed, and there was a clatter of hoofs as the two famous bandits made a dash for the mountains.

Star and Burnside rushed out, yelling like Indians, and emptied their revolvers after the flying outlaws.

"It's no use, Bob! We can't hit the rascals! Corral that horse, if you can—it may come in handy!" cried Star.

Burnside dashed across the spot where a stable had stood and caught the horse, which had just reached the hot ashes.

He brought it back to the dugout, and found Star bending over the dead outlaw.

"I don't know this fellow, but he's one of the James

gang, all right," he said, holding up a queer trinket. "Hum! Skull and crossbones in silver!"

"Hello! What's this!" exclaimed Star, who had suddenly made a discovery.

He had been searching in the fellow's pockets, hoping to find something that would betray some of the secrets of the gang, when his fingers touched another bit of metal.

"Great snakes. Thet thar looks bad!" ejaculated Bob, as he got a sight of it.

Star ground his teeth together and his face turned as pale as ashes.

"It's a detective's badge, ain't it?" Bob asked, after a minute.

Star nodded his head, and held the badge a little closer.

"It's No. 8711—Pinkerton man, at that!" he said, hoarsely. "This means that Jess has overhauled him somewhere, and probably added one more to his list of murders!"

"Sh! Get inside; there's some one comin'!" warned Bob, in a whisper.

Star thrust the badge into his pocket, and the two hid again in the dugout.

"It's an animal of some sort! Reckon he's smelled roast flesh," muttered Bob, after a minute.

Both men reloaded their weapons and waited, but after giving a howl or two the timber wolf that had been attracted by the smells skulked back again into the forest.

Once more the vigil was commenced, and at daylight the two men in the dugout decided not to wait any longer for Blink to send them help. They felt sure that the prospectors had been in battle with Jesse James, and would be in no condition to fulfill their promises.

Mounting the one horse, they started toward Rattlesnake Trail, the path being marked by the hoof-prints of Blink's party.

Not a rod had been covered when Star uttered a cry and slid from the saddle.

The next second he was holding up the small bar

of gold that one of the men had said was worth five thousand dollars.

"I reckon 'tain't wuth so much as that," said Bob, "hefting" it in his hand; "but it's vallyble enough fer Jess ter be mad about losin' it! I 'low Jim Sykes will be all-fired tickled ter know yer've found it!"

They started on again, and had just struck into the trail, when the horse gave a snort of fear and shied out into the bushes. The morning was a gray one, and there was a haze on the bushes, but in a second Star was on the ground again, making a careful investigation. Parting a thick growth of chaparral, he saw a man lying full length upon the ground, and not ten feet away was the dead body of a mustang. It was the carcass of the horse that his own mount had shied at, but Star busied himself with nothing just then but the body.

Turning it over, so he could see the face, he gave a shout of joy.

The man was asleep, not dead, as he had first supposed.

The next second he had recognized the fellow as a brother detective.

"Thunder and lightning! If it ain't Roy Denny!" he cried, slapping the fellow's shoulder smartly.

With a bound, the detective was on his feet, and had drawn his weapon. Star had to talk fast to keep his slightly dazed friend from blowing a window in him.

Greetings were exchanged, and then Denny told his story.

He had been sent to Nevada to look for Melton Sharp, the lone highwayman, and had been held up the night before by a masked road agent, who robbed him of his watch, money and papers, but left him his pistol.

"He must have been a novice," said Star, pulling the badge out of his pocket. "I killed the fellow at daylight, if I'm not mistaken!"

Denny grabbed the badge and kissed it for luck. Then he and Star walked ahead beside the horse.

"The fellow was alone, but I judged he had an appointment, by his manner," went on Denny.

"After he had got my stuff he rode off backward, promising to put a bullet into me if I moved a muscle."

"He was one of the James gang, and you're a lucky boy," laughed Star. "We're expecting every minute to come upon the bodies of our companions."

"I was lucky until my horse fell and broke its leg, and I had to shoot it," said Denny. Then he suddenly turned to Star, with a curious expression. "Don't give me away to the boys, old man, and I'll tell you a secret," he said, gayly. "I've met my fate since I came to Nevada! I've fallen in love with Miss Margaret Wiggins!"

Star caught his breath at this startling information and was about to reply, when something happened.

Two horsemen had appeared before them so suddenly that it seemed as though they had come up through the ground, and the two detectives and Bob were staring straight into the muzzles of three businesslike-looking shooting-irons.

"It's Jess, curse him! He's got us dead to rights this time!" muttered Star, under his breath.

"Throw up your hands, all three of you!" interrupted Jesse James.

He sat erect in his saddle, and there was a scornful leer on his face as he spoke, and even in the face of this danger Star noticed that he had discarded the flaming goatee and mustache.

"Reckon you don't know me very well if you think I'd leave that gold bar behind me!" went on the outlaw, as no one answered him.

"We were looking for you, Jess! Unfortunately you appeared when we least expected you, though, and, as usual, you have us at your mercy. If it's the gold bar you want, you can have it, and welcome, provided you answer two or three questions satisfactorily."

"Confusion! Listen to the man!" roared Jesse James, furiously. "He's bargaining with me when I've got a bead on his heart! By the eternal! Such gall ought to be rewarded, so cursed if I ain't going to hear your questions!"

"I thought you would," said Star, coolly, as he

looked the outlaw in the eye. "Now, first, did you meet Blink Carson with Squire Wiggins' body on their way to the diggin's?"

Jesse James stared a minute, and then burst out laughing.

"I reckon we did! Ask Frank here if we met them! There was eighteen of them in all, not counting the dead man and the gal, but there's only two at the diggin's this minute! The rest are nursin' bullet holes in the gulch up yonder!"

"How many did you kill, Jesse James?"

"Not one! We are merciful, Frank and I!" answered the outlaw, with a wink. "We were only looking for the gold bar, and we let 'em go on when we found they didn't have it."

"Is the girl at the diggin's?"

There was a longer wait before the outlaw answered, and Denny had all he could do to keep from lowering one hand to his pistol.

"What's that to you?" asked the bandit, finally.

"Answer it, you cur!" roared Denny, furiously. "The girl is my sweetheart! What have you done with her?"

A loud laugh from the outlaw followed this question, and even the dignified Frank James joined in the hilarity.

"I reckon, now, Tom Wetherby would like to hear you make that statement! Ha! Ha! So you're the gal's lover, are you? Well, if you wasn't a sleuth-hound, I'd be tempted to let you live, just for the fun of seeing you and Wetherby settle that question!"

Denny paled at these last words, but his eyes flashed furiously.

"You dare not kill me, Jesse James! You have no grudge against me!"

"You're a Pinkerton man, ain't you? Well, that's enough for me! You've got a minute to live, and so has your companion. This other fellow can go after I've got his weapons."

"Take ther revolver, and be quick erbout it, then!" growled Bob, with a sly wink at Star. "God knows I don't want ter stay ter see my friends butchered!"

Frank James rode up to the cowboy, with his weapon leveled, and relieved him promptly of his belt and pistols.

"Now, go!" ordered Jess, and the fellow made off, while Frank James drew a bead on Star, and Jess put up one of his weapons.

"If you've got anything to say, you'd better say it quick," continued Jesse James, in a taunting voice. "Sometimes you fellows die easier when you've relieved your minds! You might tell me how many there are in your crowd at present, for instance!"

"We're alone, so far as we know, Jess!" spoke up Star, promptly. "My friend here is on the track of Milton Sharp, so he doesn't deserve your bullets. As for me, you know my lay! I'm after your carcass, dead or alive, and I'd kill you like a dog this minute if I were able!"

He gave back the outlaw's glance so fearlessly and looked so brave as he spoke that Jesse James leaned in his saddle and gazed at him admiringly.

"The fellow has pluck, Frank! Too bad he ain't one of us," said Jesse James.

As he spoke the outlaw made a signal for the two detectives to separate, so that he could cover Star and his brother could attend to Denny.

"Jest oblige me by putting your face against that tree!" ordered this human fiend, coolly. "A sneak should not be honored by a bullet from the front! He should be shot in the back, as befits a coward!"

The sneer that accompanied the words was too much for Star, and he wheeled around and confronted the outlaw.

"You are the coward, Jesse James! Worse, you are a thief and a murderer! My duty to my fellow-man will be done when I have killed you!"

The fire of his words awed the bandit for a second; then, with a growl of rage, he snapped the trigger of his weapon.

"Those will be your last words, you whelp! Another whimper and I'll kill you by inches!"

Star was half-way to the tree, but he still faced the outlaw, calmly, and, although the two weapons

were once more aimed at his breast, he did not move a muscle.

Frank James had drawn nearer to his quarry, but he now stood still, staring at his brother, and a second of ominous silence followed. Star realized that death in some horrible form would come in a minute, but there was something in him that rebelled against the outlaw's orders.

He intended to die like a man—not cringing nor crawling.

"Once more! Will you do as I say?" asked Jesse James, in a furious whisper.

"No!"

The answer rang out like a bugle, and Star actually smiled.

Jesse James raised the two pistols and leaned a little in his saddle.

"One!"

As the word passed his lips there was a click of the hammer, but the bullet only grazed Star's cheek and was buried in a bowlder.

"Two!"

Another leaden missile whistled by his head, taking perhaps an eighth of an inch of the tip of the detective's ear with it.

"That's what he means by killing me by inches," thought the plucky fellow; then he glanced by Jesse to where the trail widened out a little.

"Three!"

There was the sound of galloping hoofbeats as Jesse fired the third shot, and this time the bullet merely pierced Star's hat, for the detective had ducked.

"Stop that rider whoever it is! I'll cover both of these fellows!" Jesse yelled to Frank.

Frank James turned just in time to hear shot number four, and, as the bullet struck the detective's arm, the horseman was upon them.

There was the swish of a lariat through the air, and the famous bandit was jerked from his saddle.

The next second Frank James had put a bullet into Bob Burnside's skull, and, whipping another pistol from his belt, turned upon the two detectives.

Meantime, Jesse James drew a knife from his belt

and cut the horsehair noose around his throat, just as three weapons were discharged with a sound like a volley of musketry.

CHAPTER XCII.

JESSE JAMES CAPTURED.

As the outlaw king sprang to his feet and looked around he saw four bodies stretched upon the ground. They were the two detectives, Tom Burnside and Frank James.

Frank James had just received a bullet in his arm, but a plate of metal which he had taken the precaution to wear over his heart had saved him from being mortally wounded.

The others did not move, so Jesse helped his brother to his feet, and after giving him a drink from his pocket flask he bound up his wound.

"Hark!" said Frank, who was half-dazed by the firing.

"It's the horses! They've bolted, and we've got to walk," said Jesse James, grimly. "Come!"

Taking his brother by the shoulder, he led him up the trail, and, as they turned a sharp curve, the bandit king looked back at the detectives.

"Ha! They won't bother me again, I reckon!" he chuckled. "They haven't moved since you hit 'em!"

Keeping a sharp watch, both ahead and behind them, the outlaws hurried on until they came to a brook caused by a mountain torrent.

They entered the brook, and, as they walked slowly along, Jesse James assumed another of his disguises. Emptying his pockets, he dropped the short jacket he was wearing into the shallow stream, which left him arrayed in a rough shirt and coarse breeches.

Then he attached a gray beard to his chin by passing invisible wires up over his ears, and, after putting on a gray wig and a pair of blue goggles, a wonderful change was effected in his appearance.

Frank James did the same, only his goggles were green instead of blue, and the bandit brothers looked for all the world like a couple of hermits.

Leaving the brook a quarter of a mile farther on,

they made their way through a thick wood, arriving at last before the door of a ramshackle old frame building.

Three sharp raps upon the rotten door made the latch fly open and the two outlaws stood face to face with a curious-looking creature.

This creature was an old man, who dwelt in the mountains, and whose real identity was unknown even to his closest acquaintances. "Jerry, the Toad," as he was called, was a hideous specimen of the human family.

He was cruel and vicious, both in appearance and nature.

Jesse James gave him a quick look, and then made a low remark, which the old fellow did not hear, as he was as deaf as a doorpost.

"Jerry's been drinking, Frank! Keep your wits about you! If he were to guess who we were, there'd be trouble, I'm thinking."

"I'll be careful," was the reply, and Frank stepped behind his brother.

"Who comes here?" asked the old fellow, as he blocked up the doorway with his bulky figure, which, with its short legs and big head, had given him his nickname.

Jesse James made a trumpet of his hands and fairly bellowed in the fellow's ear.

"Your friends, Jerry. We're from Southern California! Reckon you ain't forgot the Carter cousins, have you?"

The old fellow's eyes blinked and he let go of the door, so as to rub his hands together.

"We heard you lived here, Jerry, and we've jest dropped in. Reckon, now, we ain't intrudin' on the solitude of ther Nebraska Hermit, be we?"

"Jerry, the Toad," let his eyes roll from one to the other and then showed a pair of yellow fangs in his effort to appear good-natured.

"The Carter cousins, be ye? Waal! Waal! I reckon ye be! Leave yer guns outside, if ye please, pardners! That thar will tell me more'n yer tongues, I reckon!"

"We've got to do it. The old fellow'll get suspi-

cious if we don't!" muttered Jesse James, as he promptly pulled his revolvers from his belt and tucked them under the rotten doorstep.

Frank did the same and then the two outlaws entered.

They were hardly over the threshold when Jerry closed the door behind them.

This sudden exclusion of the light made the outlaws blink behind their goggles, and the next minute a heavy hand was laid upon Jesse James' shoulder.

"So you are Bill Carter, are yer, and this hyar is yer cousin! Glad ter see yer, gents! This hyar's er surprise, but it's one ter my likin'! I'm Sheriff Billkins of this hyar county, an' I'm on the lookout for scallywags!"

A roar of laughter followed, and then some one lit a pine knot, and the outlaws saw four grim-looking men, with their backs against the wall, and each holding a businesslike-looking revolver.

"What the devil's 'he meaning of this?" asked the outlaw, not losing his nerve for a minute. "We're the Carter cousins all right, but we wasn't looking fer treachery from one of the Sunset Gang, pardner!"

"Reckon now yer wasn't!" chuckled "Jerry, the Toad," with another exhibition of his fangs. "I wouldn't hev asked yer in if them shootin'-irons hadn't been behind me! Ther sheriff hyar give me ther order, an' I hed ter do it, pardner!"

"You're a cur and a knave!" exclaimed Jesse James, forgetting his danger.

"Shet up! Words don't do no good in this hyar kind of emergency, Bill Carter!" said the sheriff, brusquely. "I 'lowed if thar was er hoss thief in ther county, he was likely ter drop in at Jerry's, so hyar I be, strangers, an' you're the first birds I've bagged! Ther Carter cousins! By thunder, boys! Next ter ther James' gang, I 'low these air the precious lot of rascals that ever come ter Nebrasky!"

The sheriff was so pleased with his cleverness that he could not stop chuckling for several minutes.

"You're a little over-anxious, sheriff," remarked

Jesse James, as he threw himself into a chair, as though he was perfectly indifferent to the four sharpshooters.

"We was hoss thieves once, but thet thar ain't sayin' we be now, and, besides, what we've done in Californy ain't none of your concern."

"Thet thar'd be all right, Bill Carter, ef it warn't fer circumstantial evidence," chuckled the sheriff, cheerfully. "I reckon when thar's been nineteen thoroughbreds stole in this hyar county in forty-eight hours, it's my bounded duty ter nab er hoss thief wharever I kin find him, an' not wait till I see 'em steal the critters!"

The sheriff was alluding to the horses stolen at the time that Squire Wiggins' ranch was burned.

"Thet thar's good arguin', sheriff!" growled one of the marksmen, promptly. "Thar's hoss thieves wanted, an' I reckon ye've got 'em!"

"Two at a batch is a good haul, sheriff! Thet thar orter give yer er long step in ther perlitical direction," remarked one of the others.

"You ain't got us yet, curse you!" ejaculated Jesse James, suddenly. "We ain't done nothin' in this hyar county and we kin prove it! Ther men thet don't know a squar' game when they see it hed better not trifle with ther Carter cousins! This hyar county will be minus a sheriff in about ten minutes, accordin' ter my calculations! Open ther door thar, Jerry! Yer ther boss o' this hyar ranch! Ef any one pulls er trigger I 'low he'll do it ter his sorrow!"

He rose as he spoke and started toward the door, and just for a second even the sheriff looked astonished.

"Open the door, you squat-headed coyote!" roared Jesse James again.

"Jerry, the Toad," had been leaning against the door with his eyes fixed upon the sheriff, and at the words he rolled his beady eyes slowly toward the speaker.

Click!

The sheriff's hand had dropped to his belt and a weapon was cocked.

"Move a muscle an' I'll blow daylight through you!" he bellowed.

Jerry had started to straighten his squatty form, but he dropped back promptly and that second some one put his shoulder against the door on the outside and sent it crashing into the room.

"Halt! Who comes hyar!" roared the sheriff, at the top of his lungs.

"Blaze away, boys! It's more hoss thieves! Pepper the devils!" yelled one of the marksmen.

Three men had stepped over the threshold before the door was fairly down, and in less than a second Jesse James was grappling with the first one.

Crack went a revolver, and there was a howl of pain, then the sheriff promptly came to his senses.

"Hold on, men! Put up your weapons! Thar's er mistake here!" he bawled. "Thet thar's Blink Carson, ez honest er man as thar is in this hyar section!"

"Then wade inter the Carter cousins, sheriff, fer they're killin' ther feller," said one of the men, as he aimed a blow at Frank James that sent him spinning into a corner.

The sheriff took the hint and a free fight followed, "Jerry, the Toad," siding with the two outlaws and fighting like a demon.

Jesse James felled Blink Carson to the floor and then beat off the second man, who was fighting under great disadvantage, there being a bullet wound in his shoulder which started bleeding profusely.

In the very height of the scrimmage the outlaw found himself close to the door, and, making a leap over the rotten steps, he stooped for his pistol.

Four weapons were aimed at his head before he had succeeded in reaching them, and the sheriff's men, who had succeeded in knocking Jerry out, lined up before him in a businesslike manner.

"Reckon we'll keep this hyar game in our own hands, Bill Carter!" said one of them, sternly. "Thet thar cousin of yours has given up ther fight an' we'll jest take the two of ye erlong with us, ef yer ain't no objections!"

Jesse James ground his teeth in rage, for he saw he was helpless.

He had boasted over and over that no man could draw a bead on him, and here he was, looking into the barrels of no less than four pistols.

His bravado deserted him instantly, and up went his hands.

It was the most painful moment of his life, for he knew he was conquered. The only thing that would save him now was his clever disguise.

Should they discover his real identity they would show him no mercy.

The situation was a depressing one, but it proved the rascal's mettle.

Two of the sheriff's men watched him, while the others led Frank James and Jerry out of the building, and the sheriff himself went to Blink Carson's assistance.

A half-an-hour later the whole party was making its way on foot down the Rattlesnake Trail, with the sheriff in the rear and Blink Carson leading.

Jesse James had been tortured by seeing his own revolvers pass into the hands of Jim Sykes, while Frank's were being worn by Blink, who inspected them curiously.

What the prospectors thought of the identity of their prisoners could not be told by their words, but they exchanged an occasional significant glance with each other.

"I reckon it's Jess, all right," whispered Sykes to the third prospector, as they walked close together.

"Then mum's ther word, Jim," was the answer, and the two men began to whistle.

Their hope was to prove the identity of their prisoner when he was safely jailed.

It would be far more satisfaction to the whole world to catch Jesse James alive and have him killed by law than for him to be shot down in the wilderness, as he surely would be were it known that he was the outlaw.

When the "Diggings," as the little mining camp was called, was sighted, the party moved a little

faster and the sheriff's spirits rose to a point of jubilation.

As the party shuffled on three excited faces peered at them from behind a clump of bushes.

"By thunder, boys! We're out of the game!" remarked Lawrence Davis, in a low voice. "The sheriff has corralled Jess and his brother, too! That means that we've lost the Government's ten thousand dollars!"

"And got our death certificates, in the shape of bullet holes, besides," said Will Star, gravely.

"That was a good disguise Jess wore. Say, I wonder if they have recognized him or take him for some other outlaw!"

The three looked at each other and there was a moment of silence, then they crept out into the trail, Davis holding an arm of each, and began their slow journey down the hill to the Diggings.

Davis had trailed Jesse James across the river, but lost him on the opposite bank.

When he found the trail again it led him to the squire's demolished ranch and along the Rattlesnake Trail, until he found his injured comrades.

They reached the jail just ten minutes after Jesse James had been led into it.

Before they mounted the hill to the jail they heard some news of Miss Wiggins. She and Tom Wetherby had left the Diggings an hour before on the backs of powerful horses.

Tom had decided to go back to the Comstock and had taken his promised wife with him.

It was a hard blow to Denny, but the hope of seeing the end of Jesse James offered some compensations.

CHAPTER XCIII.

BEHIND PRISON BARS.

Jesse James had relapsed into silence during the last half-mile of the journey.

It was the most desperate position he had ever been placed in, yet the nervy outlaw kept his wits about him.

So long as the sheriff took them for the Carter cousins they had a chance for their lives.

The outlaw's aim was to get rid of Blink Carson, if possible.

Once inside of the jail building, the sheriff allowed his prisoners to seat themselves on a wooden bench, but four men were ranged along the wall, with their weapons in their hands, just they same as they had been at Jerry's shanty.

Then began a search for a judge and jury to try the men.

This was not usually considered necessary, but as there was no crime charged directly to the prisoners, the sheriff decided that it would be in keeping with the law and order.

"I reckon now you fellers hed better visit the saw-bones at ther Diggin's," this official remarked to Blink, after he had placed his guard in position. "The warden of this hyar cage will be responsible fer the prisoners an' I'll go myself an' look up Judge Newbery!"

Blink Carson looked uneasy at this step in the proceedings, but it was not time yet to betray the secret, so he only shook his head soberly.

"I 'low we'd better hang around till you git ther judge!" he answered. "Thar's them that won't think there was too many fer four men ter guard, an' the gang from the Diggin's will be up 'fore long, I reckon!"

"Thar they be now!" said the sheriff, starting for the door.

"We demand your protection, Sheriff Billkins!" said Jesse James, quickly. "See to it, you hound, thet we ain't done no injury!"

"I reckon it's only curiosity thet's bringin' 'em!" said the sheriff, a little anxiously; "tho' I hear some threats o' lynchin'! I'll just step outside an' quiet 'em a little!"

He gave another look at his prisoners and then stepped out of the jail, closing the heavy iron door behind him.

This left Blink Carson and his two friends and the sheriff's four men guarding the new prisoners,

while Sam Garland, the jail warden, sat on a stool by a grated door, through which a half-dozen brutal-looking criminals were peering.

It was a trying minute for Blink, with his important secret on his tongue's end, and his two companions shared his nervousness.

Outside they could all hear the roar of angry voices, threatening violence to the prisoners, and they knew as they listened that the crowd was momentarily increasing. The men from the settlement below were surrounding the jail, a hundred strong, and the sheriff would have to be an eloquent man, indeed, if he succeeded in calming their excitement.

Even Jesse James looked excited when a voice suddenly rose above the crowd, and five, at least, inside the jail, recognized it as belonging to Will Star, the detective.

The two outlaws stared at each other through their stained goggles and then Jesse James let his glance wander to the grated door.

As he did so he gave a start and then controlled himself quickly.

Behind the gratings he had caught a glimpse of a member of his own gang, and the two almost instantly exchanged a signal.

Another roar from the crowd made even the warden turn pale, and then cry after cry from hoarse throats penetrated the heavy walls of the jail.

"Let us at him, sheriff; he's a murderer, curse him!"

"Fire the jail, if you can't get him any other way, boys!"

Once more the roar of voices made those inside rise to their feet and turn involuntarily toward the sheet of iron which was between them and the howling mob of miners.

There was a rush for the door and the sheriff was overpowered.

A key grated in the rusty lock, and Blink Carson joined the warden in giving an order.

"Fire on them, men! We must protect our prisoners!" he roared.

The weapons of the entire number were turned

promptly upon the door and at that second the grating leading to the pen slid open and the murderous crew behind sprang like cats upon the backs of the men who were protecting them.

"Quick! Down them with a blow and seize their weapons!" ordered Jesse James, in a low voice.

Thud!

Thud!

Biff!

Bang!

Thud!

The blows were rained thick and fast, and the men went down, leaving the gang of rascals in full possession.

When the door finally gave way there was a yell of horror, and a dozen members of the mob fell back, mortally wounded.

"Keep it up! Straight ahead, boys!" roared Jesse James, as he emptied every chamber of his own good weapons, which he had jerked from the hands of Blink Carson and his companions. By the time a score of their number had fallen before their fire the miners drew back. They had been put to rout by the reception that had awaited them.

At the very first onslaught the three detectives had gained a place of safety.

They had done what they could to avert the thing, but were too weak and sore to take part in the fight.

It was fully three minutes before a man inside of the jail recovered from the terrific blows that the outlaws had given them and was able to stagger to the door to see what was happening.

By that time the cutthroat crew, with Jesse James at its head, had driven the miners some distance from the door and were raining bullets into them as they fled, panic-stricken, to shelter. Not a third had been armed, for they had come from their work in the mines with the full intention of hanging the outlaws, so the ruffians were having it all their own way, and Blink and his friends were absolutely powerless.

The three detectives crouched behind the bushes and waited silently; then, as Jess leaped into the sad-

dle of a solitary horse, they turned their weapons in his direction.

"One!"

"Two!"

"Three!"

Star whispered the words and their weapons cracked simultaneously. Two bullets went astray, but the third struck the outlaw squarely in the back, glancing off again promptly and doing no damage.

"Curse the fellow! He's protected in some way!" growled Davis. "I've heard that he wore a breast-plate, but I didn't suppose he was in full armor!"

He dashed out of the bushes as he spoke and tried to get another shot at the fleeing outlaw, but he could only join the howling mob, who were coming back, and race foolishly after the man who had disappeared so suddenly. One of the miners had succeeded by this time in putting a bullet into Jerry, and Star and Denny wounded three of the jailbirds by shooting from ambush.

There was no other horse and the balance of the bloodthirsty ruffians had used up their bullets, so there was nothing to do but attack the miners single-handed, and here they found themselves at a decided disadvantage.

When the fracas was all over the whole seven jailbirds were accounted for, and Frank James and "Jerry, the Toad," had been added to their number.

The miners came to their senses quickly and a posse was formed and sent after Jess, and then a meeting was held to decide the fate of the prisoners.

Frank James was shorn of his gray beard and goggles and stood up where every one could see him. It was the preliminary to what was about to follow.

"Thet thar'll be ther last we'll see of Jess, so we're lucky ter have this hyar rascal in our hands," said the sheriff, who nursed several serious cuts and a sore head after the scrimmage.

"He's the image of Jess, so take a good look at him, men," warned Star; then he and Denny hobbled away to look for a doctor.

Davis was anxious to get after Jess, but he was too alarmed about his friends to leave them in that

condition, and it was decided that the three should remain at the Diggings until they heard from the posse.

"They've decided to keep Frank James tied to a tree in the jail yard, all night," Davis informed his companions.

"He's to be inspected by every man and woman in the Diggings for twenty-four hours, and then peppered with bullets to-morrow night at sundown."

"I reckon now thar'll be some good work done on his carcass, if the men have their way," said the sawbones of the Diggings. "Peck Wilson is er goin' ter tattoo his name on ther rascal's chest, an' ther jedge himself is goin' ter put on ther finishin' touches!"

The day passed quietly at the Diggings, but it was an ominous quiet.

There was no work done in the mine, but every man was busy, and, two hours before sunset, the posse returned in low spirits.

As they drew up before the sheriff's office in the main thoroughfare of the Diggings, groups of stern-faced men came from all directions.

Many of them wore bandages, and they were all armed to the teeth.

They were thinking of the comrades who had been killed by outlaw bullets, and who were lying in the various shanties waiting for burial on the morrow.

"I reckon Jess has made er break fer ther Comstock, pardners," said the leader of the posse, grimly. "We trailed ther rascal ter ther Rainbow Ravine, an' then ther tracks was uncertain. Thar's some thet thinks he came back over ther same ground, but I 'low he's gone on ter do more damage. Thar's er chance fer him ter steal somethin' 'round erbout the Comstock!"

"I 'low he come back ther same way he went," said another of the posse.

"Which would mean that he intends to rescue his brother," said Star, promptly. "That's just like Jess! He'd risk anything, that fellow! I want you to keep a strict watch for the rascal!"

Star knew the outlaw better than these men did.

and he had several times seen Jesse James accomplish wonders.

"I reckon we'd better be movin', sheriff! Thar's some one signalin' up yonder," spoke up the miner who was to do the tattooing.

Star glanced up the bluff to the jail building, and saw a man waving a red flag and making frantic gestures.

"Quick! Get up there, men! There's something wrong!" he said, sharply.

"Thar can't be!" growled the sheriff. "I calkulate I fixed thet thar guard myself! Thar's only nine prisoners, an' thar's nine men on duty!"

"Nevertheless there's something wrong!" said Denny, promptly. "Lend us some horses, sheriff, and we'll go up and see what it is. You fellows can wait till sunset if you want to!"

The miners were nearly all mounted, and the request was promptly granted, three of the men dropping from their saddles and edging across the street to a rum shop on the corner.

"Yer can wave two flags ef thar's anything wrong," yelled the sheriff after them. "I reckon thet thar chap up yonder is jest celebratin' a leetle!"

The detectives were well up the hill long before his remarks were ended, and the majority of the natives disappeared into the various shanties.

Not one of them had placed any importance upon the waving of the flag, although, since the jail was built, this had been a sign of trouble. The extra guard around the jail was the excuse for this security, but, in spite of their carelessness, supper in the Diggings was a little hurried that evening.

The detectives were nearly at the top of the hill when a shout from the bluff made them rein up sharply.

"Hi, thar! What's ther matter down yonder? Help! We want help! Ther devil's ter pay up hyar!" bellowed some one, in great excitement.

Star wheeled his horse sharply, and, with a word of explanation, started back down the hill to arouse the miners.

"It's Jess, no doubt!" he called back, over his shoulder. "Look out for him, boys!"

A sudden flash of light on the bluff was accompanied by a roar like thunder, and the man who had been waving the flag on the brink of a twenty-foot precipice a second before came hurtling down the steep bank with a part of the iron door of the jail after him.

"They've blown up the jail! Ride for it, Star!" yelled Denny, as he urged his horse upward.

Flash!

Roar!

Bang!

Another explosion followed the first one promptly, and by this time every man in the Diggings was in his saddle, staring up at the smoke and flame above them. The two detectives had almost gained the top of the hill when they were met by a cloud of smoke that blinded their horses, and they were obliged to wheel about and hug the side of the path to windward of the stifling volume.

At that second a form was clearly outlined upon the bluff, and this was promptly joined by another and another.

Instantly a shout went up from the miners below.

"It's the outlaw, Jesse James! Curses on him! He's blown up the jail and rescued his brother!"

CHAPTER XCIV.

THE OUTLAW'S BOLD PLAN.

There was no following the nervy outlaw, and the miners knew it.

By climbing the steps behind the jail he could soon lose himself completely in the forests.

The two detectives were nearer, but their path was obstructed by the ruins of the jail.

Two minutes after the last explosion the smoke had lifted sufficiently for them to view the destruction, but by that time there was no sign of either Jesse or his brother.

When the natives came galloping up the hill they found Denny busily engaged separating the dead

guards from the prisoners, for the bomb had killed an equal number of each.

Besides the dead there were three injured miners, who were promptly placed on the horses and transported to their shanties.

Blink Carson was for going on at once after the outlaws, but he was talked out of the idea, and a night was spent in planning.

Meanwhile, Jesse James and his brother Frank, in company with "Jerry, the Toad," had made their way to the Rainbow Ravine, and were hiding in a dense growth of mesquite, expecting to be pursued by the miners.

"The rascals will follow us now, and with sharp knives," chuckled the outlaw. "They're a thick-skulled lot, but I reckon I've roused 'em! Too bad we lost so many of the boys, but a dynamite bomb is confoundedly uncertain. You can never figure exactly what the damage will be, but I reckon, now, that the jail will need rebuilding!"

"Ther warn't stick nor stone left, pardner," answered "Jerry, the Toad," who had long since discovered the identity of the outlaw.

"What's the lay, Jess?" asked Frank James, who felt very grateful toward his brother. "Is there anything worth stealing here at the Rainbow?"

Jesse James put his ear to the ground and listened for a minute before he replied.

He wished to satisfy himself that the enemy was not approaching.

"I wouldn't have come this way if there wasn't something in sight," he answered, crustily. "Keep your eye peeled, Jerry, while I'm doing the talking. We'd be in bad shape to fight if these curs should drop down on us too sudden."

He drew the revolvers from his belt as he spoke, and examined them carefully; then, as Frank edged a little nearer to him, he outlined their next adventure.

An hour later, Jerry and Frank were asleep, and the outlaw was keeping guard.

At just midnight he aroused the two, and they all

crept out of the bushes into the zigzag path that led up the ravine.

An hour of hard climbing brought them to the top of the bluff, after which they descended the sloping sides of the mountain for a distance of over two thousand feet, reaching a level plane that was almost a prairie.

Jesse James consulted his watch often, and, as the dawn began to break, he called a halt, and a fire was built behind two monstrous boulders.

Two quick shots of a rifle brought down a brace of birds for breakfast, and Frank James turned cook, while his brother slept soundly.

The outlaw's first act upon awakening was to compare his watch with the sun; then Jesse James uttered a volley of blood-curdling oaths.

"What the deuce is the matter, Jess?" asked Frank, in surprise.

"Missed him, by the eternal! That comes from having two fools on guard!" roared the outlaw, sullenly.

"Haw! haw! Reckon, now, I'm hyar, Jess," said a voice just behind the boulder, and a man in leather breeches and a slouch hat appeared suddenly before them.

"I reckoned I'd be on the safe side and be dead sure who yer was," went on the stranger, as he offered a hand to each. "I warn't in ther mood ter see ther sheriff this mornin', an' I 'lowed yer'd say somethin' afore long that would give me my bearin's."

"I reckoned you'd pass us! Glad ter see yer, Jenks! Put it thar again, old fellow!" returned Jesse James, jovially.

Then he turned to his companions with a brief introduction:

"A fellow I met in the ravine yesterday—'Jenks,' he calls himself. I got the infernal machine of him, so I reckon you owe him a vote of thanks, pardners."

The newcomer had tackled one of the birds without waiting for an invitation, but he found time to answer between the mouthfuls.

"I don't mind tellin' yer what I was goin' ter do,

pardners," he said, cheerfully. "I stole thet thar bomb and er couple of others from ther Comstock when I left it. I kin git rich faster than by workin' below ground forever. I'm goin' ter blow up the old man's shack and help myself ter ther stuff! I'll let yer come along, ef yer want ter, pardners!"

Frank James glanced at his brother, and Jesse promptly tapped his forehead significantly.

He intended to convey the knowledge that the examiner from the Comstock was a trifle lacking in the upper story.

"Thet's ther talk, stranger!" commented Jerry, promptly. "I reckon now the old man is the——"

"Sh! Let up, Jerry! There's some one coming!" warned Jesse James, suddenly.

There was silence instantly, and, a moment later, the sound of hoofbeats could be heard in the distance.

Jesse James jumped to his feet and stamped out the fire; then he drew a revolver from his belt and cocked it.

Jerry was peering around the rocks.

"Too bad we ain't in range of ther path, Jess," said Jerry. "We mout er picked 'em off easy, ef we chose er better persition."

"Let 'em pass us! We're safer behind than ahead," was the answer, and then Jesse James began to creep slowly upon one of the boulders.

"It's the sheriff from the Diggin's, boys," he muttered, after a minute. "He's got twenty men, and some good horses! Hello! the three sleuths are with him!"

"Wait," added the outlaw, dropping to the ground and tapping Jenks on the shoulder.

The crack-brained fellow had a bone in his fingers, and was too much interested in his meal to pay much attention to the situation.

"Quick! Have you got another of those bombs, Jenks?" asked Jesse James, hoarsely.

The fellow looked blank, and Jerry touched his other shoulder.

"Yes! yes! Give us one o' ther dynamite jiggers an' we'll blow ther hull push ter blazes!"

Frank James had mounted the boulder and looked down now excitedly.

"Hurry, Jess! They're almost up to us. If you're going to throw the thing, now's the time!"

"Quick! Give it to me, you fool! Do you want me to lose this chance?" hissed Jesse James, in the fellow's ear.

The crazy man came to his senses suddenly, and, in another instant, both fists were doubled up threateningly.

"I gave you one; you can't have another! How the devil will I get ther stuff if you take all ther cart-ridges?"

Jesse James did not wait to reply, but landed a blow squarely under the madman's ear, knocking him down and out in the space of a second.

"Now, you idiot, you'll know better next time!" he growled, as he dove into the fellow's pockets.

"Hurry, Jess!" said Frank James, again. "Toss the thing over the rock yonder! Wait, here's a match. One! two! three!"

Jesse James had lighted the fuse to a small dynamite bomb, and the thing went hissing and spluttering over the rocks and bushes.

As it struck, a half-a-hundred feet away, there was a loud explosion, which echoed through the valley and from several points among the mountains.

A sharp yell followed, and then the hoofbeats grew louder, as every horse in the group made a dash forward.

Jesse James was upon the rock again like a cat, but this time he hardly raised his head above the flinty surface.

"Curse the luck! There's not a man hurt!" he growled, furiously. "The curs have gone on, but they'll come back. Leave the lunatic here, and bolt for it, boys! There's a path to the right that those horses can't follow!"

Jesse James darted into the bushes as he spoke, and his companions followed him, leaving Jenks on the ground, with the remnants of the breakfast beside him.

"Reckon they'll lay it all to him, and it will serve

him right for being so slow," chuckled the outlaw, as he parted the bushes and pressed on rapidly.

"If he's as crazy as he looks, there's nothing to fear," answered Frank. "The sheriff won't get much that he can swear by out of him."

"It was a bad break, but we're safe, at any rate," said the bandit chief, as they at last gained a clearing. "Now, we'll take a turn to the northwest and be at Candilaria by dark. It'll be a long tramp, but we've got to do it."

They tramped on after that for many miles, Jesse James leading the way as tirelessly as though his frame was made of iron.

On the top of one of the hills they got a glimpse of the sheriff's party, and the sight seemed to thrill Jesse James with fresh energy.

"The fools have lost us," he said with a chuckle.

"They're behind us, too! I reckon they must have gone back to investigate the racket! That means that Jenks has probably cashed in," said Frank, indifferently.

Jesse James strode on again until he was obliged to drop through sheer weariness.

Another fire was made and some game roasted; then the outlaws took turns in guarding their camp until daylight.

After breakfast the tramp was resumed, Jesse James consulting the sun frequently, and twice during the day the sheriff's posse was sighted.

"The hounds have got the scent! They mean to drive us to cover," growled the outlaw, as he watched the group of riders on a distant hill.

They were riding leisurely and looking carefully over the surrounding country.

"They'll wear us out, Jess! We can't keep up this tramp forever!" said Frank, at last. "Suppose we strike for the Big Walker and make tracks for a railroad, or else get over the border into California?"

The outlaw shook his head, and then made a startling announcement.

"I'm going to try the loon's plan and visit the Comstock," he said, doggedly. "There's millions

there, and it's the last place on earth we'd be expected to visit."

"It's a fool's errand, Jess! The Comstock is too well guarded," said his brother, earnestly. "Besides, there'll be nothing left of us after a few days more of tramping."

"That's where I'm going! You can cut loose, if you want to," was the outlaw's answer.

"If we only had horses," began Frank, again.

"We'll have 'em soon! Get out your lariats and come over behind the mesquite yonder!"

"Wild horses, by ther stars!" said Jerry. "There's fun ahead, I reckon, pardners!"

The three crept cautiously through the bushes, and, in less than five minutes, they saw that Jesse was right in his conjecture.

A half-a-dozen wild mares were grazing on the slope ahead, and, by keeping out of sight in the bushes, they succeeded in getting near enough to swing the lassoo, all three selecting a beast, as they knew there would be but one chance at the creatures.

Swish! went the ropes, and the noose of each dropped cleverly over the head for which it was intended.

Then, as the others galloped away, snorting with fear, the outlaws braced themselves and drew the lariats tighter.

After being jerked over the ground for some distance, they succeeded in throwing the frightened beasts, and then began the struggle for supremacy.

The noble animals reared and plunged, bit and kicked, but they were subdued at last to some degree of tractability.

Hours were spent in training the pretty creatures; then, using their lariats for bridles, the outlaws were able to guide them over the mountains.

This made the long journey to the Comstock Lode much more easily accomplished, but a new danger awaited the robbers in every county.

The news of their presence in Esmeralda County was demonstrated when the sheriff of that county, followed by a gang of nineteen men, passed within a hundred yards of where they lay in the bushes.

"The whole country is after us, curse the luck!" growled Jesse James. "We've got those sleuth-hounds to thank for that! They intend to head us off! How the deuce have the whelps been able to track us?"

"I reckon the posse from the Diggin's have given up the chase," was Frank's answer. "They'd hardly attempt to follow us on any jaunt like this. Besides, the sheriff has no right to come over the border."

"We've got to keep moving," was the bandit king's answer, and once more the trio started on over the mountains and prairies, hugging the California State line as closely as possible for excellent reasons.

A last detour to dodge the railroad brought them in sight of Virginia City, and five miles before the mining camp in the mountains was reached they had discovered signs of the mine owner's vigilance.

Mounted men could be seen here and there, but the eagle eye of the outlaw discovered them in time, and a wild detour of a hill always shielded them from observation.

When the roofs of the reduction works finally came in view, Jesse James called a halt and waited a little.

The Comstock Mine was growing rapidly, and every man in that section knew the necessity for caution, for Nevada had already become a good pasture-ground for bandits.

The metals were kept under a guard that was doubled at night, and not infrequently transportation to the railroads was made under the protection of United States soldiers, who were stationed at near-by reservations.

That Jesse James should imagine himself capable of stealing so much as an ounce of this precious metal seemed the acme of conceit, yet Frank knew him so well that he felt sure he would undertake it.

And, as soon as it was dark enough to begin operations, Jesse James gave evidence of putting his plan into action.

The new dangers that confronted him made him forget the old ones completely, so the various

sheriffs and detectives were put out of his consideration.

His plan was to surround the reduction works at the mine, and make way with some of the bags of gold dust before they were taken to safer quarters.

To do this he needed additional forces, so his first move was to find some rascals among the natives who would play the traitor for a money consideration.

Once more a slight change was made in their costumes, then the three rascals separated, and each approached the settlement from a different path, after agreeing to meet at a certain place later.

The night was dark and they evaded the sentries easily and were soon mingling with a rough crowd in one of the largest buildings in the village.

This place was a sort of eating-house with a saloon attachment, and, as strangers frequently stopped there when they had business at the Comstock, there was nothing particular thought of their appearance.

Men in rough clothing and wearing hair of a year's growth were throwing dice at the tables, and every one had a bottle before him containing some sort of liquor.

As Jesse James sauntered into the place by one door, Frank and Jerry entered by another, and Frank made a hasty signal to his brother.

In an instant the clever outlaw glanced sharply at the crowd.

There were three men seated at one of the tables making a bluff at eating, and, in spite of their clever disguises, Jesse James recognized the three detectives.

How many more of the men from the Diggings were in the room he could not tell, for the place was thick with the fumes of bad tobacco.

"Keep your eye peeled for the sheriff. I'll look after the sleuths," he muttered, under his breath, as he passed Frank between the tables.

Frank and Jerry strolled off at once, and the outlaw dropped into a chair directly in front of the three

detectives, and as he called for a "bottle of rye," he laid his revolver down heavily upon the table.

This action attracted the attention of nearly every man in the place, and Jesse James leaned back in his chair with a cruel look upon his features.

CHAPTER XCV.

DRIVEN TO COVER.

A minute later the outlaw regretted what he had done, for the men crowded around his table, shutting off his view of the detectives completely.

"Who ther devil be yer, stranger?" asked a man whom Jesse recognized instantly as the sheriff of Storey County.

"By thunder! the whole lot of 'em are after me!" was the outlaw's first thought, but he only tipped his chair back on two legs and answered the question coolly.

"I reckon thet thar don't consarn yer, pardner! I've dropped in fer a bite an' a drink, ther same as ther rest of yer, an' I 'low it won't be healthy fer none of yer ter fergit yer manners! See down, an' I'll order ther drinks, just ter show thet I b'ar no ill-feelin's!"

"It's Jess, all right, and he wants to get a bead on us!" whispered Star, at that minute. "Shall we let him have a bullet without waiting for explanations?"

"I guess that's our play," began Davis, when some one tapped him on the shoulder.

"Touch your pistols and you are dead men!" said Frank James, in a low voice, as he and "Jerry, the Toad," thrust their faces over the detectives' shoulders.

Star took one look at the grim faces, and raised his hands above the table.

His two companions did the same, and the outlaws drew back instantly.

"See that you keep them there!" warned Frank James, as he moved away.

The men—some fifty or more—grouped themselves at the tables, and, after exchanging a look

with his brother, Jesse James ordered a keg to be opened.

"Hanged if the rascal ain't fooled the whole push!" muttered Denny, under his breath. "It's a good one on the sheriffs of this blooming county, but it's rough on us, for there's trouble coming!"

"Billkins will know him! Too bad he ain't here," answered Star, as Jesse James himself rose and set three glasses on their table.

"Reckon, now, you'll drink, won't you?" asked the outlaw, with a steely look in his eyes.

"Anything ter be agreeable," answered Star, promptly, and, after a keen look at the three the outlaw backed away and seated himself once more in his original position.

Five minutes later the scene was one of revelry. Men roared obscene jokes and cursed like pirates.

Even Blink Carson, the one man whom the detectives relied on, was in an opposite corner of the room, singing a maudlin love song.

"He's paralyzed!" muttered Star, as Blink's head finally dropped on the table.

"So's the Storey sheriff and his brother official from Esmeralda. They're a healthy lot to be on the track of Jesse James! He'll have the whole lot of 'em under the tables in ten minutes."

"I reckon you three chaps air strangers in this hyar section, same as yours truly," remarked Jesse James, during a lull in the uproar.

He had his keen eyes upon Star, so the detective answered promptly:

"I reckon we be, stranger."

A dozen of the drinkers turned and looked at the detectives, and, as Jesse James asked another question, there were wise glances exchanged.

"What's yer bizness hyar, ef yer'll allow ther question?"

Star did not hesitate a second, but answered, distinctly:

"Ther jail in Lincoln County was blowed up a while ago, an' we're hyar helpin' ther sheriff ter bag ther culprit!"

"Snakes! Thet thar's ther extr'ordin'ryest state-

ment I reckon we ever heerd, pardners," remarked one of the men, dryly. "What right hez ther sheriff of Lincoln County ter be huntin' jailbirds in Esmeralda? I move thet we find thet thar impudent official, an' chase him back whar he b'longs! I 'low we kin take keer of all ther scamps as come ter ther Comstock!"

Star gave the speaker a sharp glance and understood his words instantly.

The fellow was one of the sharpshooters, whose duty it was to guard the chests and bags of precious metal.

"Yer'll feel diff'rent, pardner, when I tell yer who 'twas thet blew up ther jail," said Star, curtly.

"Let it out, then, an' be quick erbout it!" roared the guard, with a move toward the revolver in his belt.

Star let his gaze rest upon the outlaw's face, as he replied:

"Ther fellow was Jesse James! We had his brother, Frank, bagged, an' Jess blew up the jail. He has killed er half-a-dozen of ther best men thet ever set foot in ther Diggin's, ter say nothin' of old Squire Wiggins, way back on ther Maopa!"

There was an ominous silence after this news had been heard, and nearly every man in the room put a hand on a weapon.

"We've tracked ther rascal ter ther Comstock," went on Star, coolly. "An' ther sheriff is outside givin' ther proper warnin's. Jesse James is somewheres in these hyar diggin's, an' he's fair game fer ennybody, so ther sheriff of Lincoln County has as good a right ter chase him as any one, I reckon!"

"Yer right, thar, stranger," said the man, raising a rifle from the floor, and giving an eagle glance along the glittering barrel.

At that minute two men stepped behind the outlaw's chair, and Jesse James gave a quick look over his shoulder.

In a second the three detectives had weapons in their hands, but the burly form of the last speaker moved between them and their quarry.

The two men who had stepped behind Jesse were

Jerry and his brother. There was nothing behind them but a rude bar filled with glasses.

This was exactly as good as having his back against the wall, and a smile of satisfaction played over the outlaw's features.

It was a thrilling situation, and the three detectives paled as they realized it.

A swerve of the sharpshooter's body would precipitate trouble, and the victory would lie with the man quickest at the trigger.

Star half rose from the table, and the click of two weapons followed.

Then Frank James took deliberate aim in Star's direction.

"I reckon yer'd better remain seated, stranger! Thar ain't no use in gettin' excited!" he said, coolly.

Star sank back in his chair and the sharpshooter laid down his rifle.

As his body bent a little there was a sharp report from two pistols.

Davis and Denny had fired together, but, unfortunately, both had aimed at the same man.

"Jerry, the Toad," was the victim.

Jesse James was on his feet in a second, roaring at the guard to stand aside, and, in less than a second, the place was a pandemonium.

"Look out, men! The fellow with the red beard is Jesse James!" yelled Star.

Crack! went a weapon, and the brave detective fell back in his chair just as the door flew open and a gang of men entered.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

The three outlaws fired together, and, crash! went every lantern and lamp in the room, and, a second later, a lamp exploded, going off like a cannon and throwing a stream of blazing kerosene in every direction.

In the excitement a dozen weapons cracked, filling the room with smoke and powder.

Jesse James bolted for the door and ran plump into

Sheriff Billkins, who was in the lead of the newcomers.

Biff! went the outlaw's sledge-hammer fist under the official's ear, and, as the sheriff fell, Jesse James dropped beside him.

Bullets whistled above him, and the men, thinking him dead, leaped over his body to take a hand in the general scrimmage.

"He's hit, boys! For God's sake! stop shooting!" roared Denny, from the top of a table.

The two sheriffs present (Billkins being unconscious from the blow Jesse had given him) attempted to quiet the disturbance, and, five minutes later, the whole crowd were in the street, every man looking for Jesse James among the smoke-begrimed miners.

"Find that red-handed devil and never mind ther rest!" roared the sheriff of Storey County.

Davis brought Star out and seated him on a rock, while he tied a handkerchief over his wound.

The detective had been hit in the shoulder, but his nerve was good and he used his voice to subdue the others.

Denny moved from one to the other in the hope of finding the outlaw, for he had seen him fall; but Jesse James had vanished, and so had his brother.

"Cut fer ther stores, boys!" yelled one of the guards, as soon as they were outside. "Ther scoundrel may be there by this time, stealing ther gold!"

A break for the building where the bullion was stored was made at once, and this reduced the number before the eating-house to about a dozen.

In the group were the three sheriffs—Billkins, much the worse for wear; Blink Carson, as steady as a clock; two other chaps from the Diggings and the three detectives.

"Ther cuss can't escape! Look thar!" yelled Blink.

Lights were flashing all over the camp, and a score of horses had been saddled, while stern, determined voices were roaring orders.

"Ther manager and everybody else is after ther scamp, I reckon! Thar goes an extry guard, an'

look at thet woman! What ther deuce is she up to?"

A woman's figure could be seen in the light of a lantern swinging from a post, and the next second a sweet voice rang out like a bugle:

"Quick, men! He's in the tramway! I saw him myself! Hurry and guard the other end of the Sutro tunnel!"

"It's Miss Wiggins, by ginger?" yelled Denny, who had recognized her voice, and the next minute he sprang toward her, calling, "Margaret! Margaret!"

"I reckon thet thar feller is lookin' fer trouble," remarked some one, in a cold voice, and Tom Wetherby suddenly appeared at the shoulder of one of the sheriffs.

"Thet will keep, Tom! If ye know ther way to thet tunnel, take us thar," said Sheriff Billkins, shrilly.

"Come on, then," said Tom, darting toward a canal in the rear of a row of shanties.

Miss Wiggins and Denny had disappeared, but already the men were dividing forces in order to guard every exit to the famous tunnel.

As they galloped away, Star was obliged to part from his friends and look for medical assistance and a little nursing.

As he made a tour of the camp he could not help noticing the preparations which had been made in the space of less than ten minutes.

The guard around the company's stores where the treasure was kept had been promptly trebled, while at the reduction works the doors were closed and a squad of mounted men deployed at all corners.

The detective was halted three times before he found a doctor, but at last he reached the door of a comfortable cabin.

An exclamation of surprise crossed his lips as he entered and found Margaret Wiggins in possession of the shanty.

"I'm the camp's nurse," said the girl, promptly, "and here's the settlement doctor. He's a little hard of hearing, but he'll cure you, sir!"

An old Indian, with the remnants of feathers still in his hair, came forward as she spoke.

Denny had taken Margaret to her cabin after warning her of her danger. As he turned to go he came face to face with his stern-browed rival.

"Jess is in the tunnel, and every outlet is guarded,"

said the cowboy, briefly. "I reckon, now, bein' as how you air a detective, yer place is outside, pardner!"

No reference was made to Margaret, and without a word, Denny secured a horse at the first corral and joined the first group of guards, who sat in their saddles before one of the entrances to the mine, with weapons cocked between their fingers.

Somewhere in that subterranean passage the two outlaws were hiding, and Denny forgot his disappointment as he appreciated the situation.

Jesse James would be riddled with bullets when he ventured to leave the tunnel, while it meant sure death to whosoever attempted to follow him.

It began to look as if the famous outlaw's days were numbered, but it also meant a wonderful division and sub-division of the government's ten thousand dollars.

CHAPTER XCVI.

THE OUTLAW'S DISAPPEARANCE.

In less than an hour after Jesse James and his brother vanished from the eating-house, the whole length of the famous tramway was guarded. Davis and Denny had joined the first group, and were helping to cover one of the jagged holes in the side of the mountain which led directly to the tunnel.

Outside of the entrance was a pile of loose stones, and the space around was rough and uncertain, but the horses were used to it and maintained a steady footing.

All along the inside of the tunnel, at intervals, were empty tram cars, and here and there was a chest of powder waiting to be conveyed to the lode, deeper in the mountain.

The night was dark, but the stars peeped out shyly and made the outlines of the rugged rocks a little less forbidding.

The men wore anxious faces, yet they were confident of victory.

There seemed to be no avenue of escape for the daring outlaw.

"I reckon thar's news comin'!" said the sheriff, as a rider galloped up, and Pete Hendricks, the captain of the mine, dismounted to fix his stirrup.

"Thar's proof thet ther robber is caged," he began, coolly. "Mike Hennessey went in at ther second shaft an' that's ther last that has been seen of

him. Thar was one shot inside, an' thet was all. I 'low Mike's er goner, an' Jess is waitin' fer another."

"Mike was a fool ter risk it," said one of the miners.

Just at that minute they heard another shot echoing through the tunnel.

"Great snakes! Thar's another fool gone!" growled Sheriff Billkins, turning his horse's head. "I'll jest go down yonder an' put er stop ter sech nonsense!"

He rode off as he spoke, Pete Hendricks accompanying him, and the six miners slid from their saddles to stretch their legs for a minute.

Denny moved a little nearer to the jagged hole in the mountain that formed one entrance to the long tunnel, and put his ear against the rock to hear what was going on inside.

A dull roar and several sharp reports sounded instantly, and the detective sprang back with an expression of alarm on his features.

"There's a battle going on! The men must have gone into the tunnel to force him out! Hark! There it goes again! That was a guardsman's rifle!"

He looked at his companions as he spoke, and in a second they were back in the saddle.

"We'd better go down! I reckon we're needed!" said one, glancing along the sloping range of hills. "Ther boys are all-fired reckless ter risk thar lives thet way! Come on, pardners! The two sleuths kin guard this hyar entrance, bein' as how ther scrimmage is a full quarter of a mile further down ther tunnel!"

"We can cover it all right! Go on!" answered Davis, and the miners put spurs to their horses and galloped over the narrow path that skirted the hills in the same direction as the famous subway.

"This means that we're out of the game, old man," said Davis, as he watched them. "Jess is probably surrounded by this time, and will die fighting like a redskin. I'd like to have seen the last struggle of the daring devil!"

"How long is this tunnel, anyhow?" asked Denny, turning to gaze back over the mountains.

Davis started to answer, when another sound in the subterranean passage stopped him.

Crash after crash was followed by a faint puff of smoke from the exit, and the rumble and roar seemed to go on like distant thunder.

"Great Scott! I've got it! Jess has found powder in the tunnel, and is blowing the miners up!" said Davis, suddenly. "That means that he'll have to be movin' all the time!"

A yell from a dozen throats seemed to answer his remark, and Denny pointed to a group of the miners who had reappeared in the distance, and were making toward them, waving their hats excitedly.

"They've flushed him! Jess is coming this way!" roared Davis, as he comprehended the situation. "Now, then, steady, old man! Keep your finger on the trigger and let her go the minute you see a head in the gap yonder!"

The two bent low in their saddles and raised their revolvers, and the next second something sped by the exit like a flash of lightning.

"It's Jess himself! He's on a tram car, and the grade is in his favor! Blaze away, Denny!" yelled Davis, excitedly.

Crack!

Crack!

The two weapons spoke simultaneously, but the tram car passed the exit and was out of sight in an instant.

Flash!

Crack!

A bullet sped from the darkness of the tunnel and whizzed past Denny's ear, and a loud laugh was wafted to the ears of the detectives.

"It's Jess! Curse him!" roared Davis, pulling the trigger again. "The fellow is running away on one of the tram cars! Quick, Denny! We'll catch him on the next grade! It's our turn to warn the boys up yonder that the scoundrel is coming!"

They made a dash down the gentle incline that was giving the outlaw his speed, and then urged their horses up a grade which led to the next entrance to the tunnel.

When they reached the spot they found seven miners on guard, but, after listening intently, they could hear nothing of the outlaws.

"Fooled, by thunder! The cur has turned around and gone back," growled Denny. "Now the question is, was he in time to get away? Those fellows were in sight before we chased the tram car!"

There was nothing to do but go back to the spot they had left and look for some sign that the outlaws had made good use of their opportunity. They

found the miners there talking like parrots, not one of them having a reasonable conjecture to offer.

"Ef he come out, he must er crawled like er snail," said Sheriff Billkins. "Thar ain't nothin' come out er thet thar hole but smoke an' powder! I reckon ther cuss is still in thar!"

"I'm goin' in! Thar don't no one need ter try an' stop me, cause they can't!" growled Pete Hendricks.

The next minute he had slid from his horse and was picking his way between the rocks to the level bed of the tramway.

"Whoop! Hi, thar! Here's ther rascal's carriage!" he yelled a second later. "Ther cuss has gone on without it!"

He came out trundling the tram car as he spoke, and the men could see that there was an empty ore chest on it.

"Frank must have set the car going and it stopped at the grade," said Davis, thoughtfully. "Now, where the deuce are the two cutthroats?"

It was a serious question, but there was no one to answer it.

The entrances were all guarded, and there was no noise inside of the tunnel.

If Jesse James was still inside, he was surely plotting a desperate move, and the men on guard, knowing this, took a last look at their weapons.

Suddenly a monstrous bell clanged the hour of four and a whoop went up from the throats of the miners.

"Ther rascals are between ther devil an' ther deep sea, now, I reckon!" remarked one of the mine owners, who had joined the detectives. "The men are bound to stumble over them on their way out of the lode, but I hate to think of the good fellows I shall lose at the hands of those two ruffians!"

"There they come!" shouted Hendricks, as the first batch of men appeared.

But a surprise of the greatest magnitude was to follow.

Not a sign of either outlaw had been seen by the men who came out from the bowels of the mountains. They were dumfounded when they were told that Jesse James was in the tunnel.

At six o'clock the guard had not been abandoned, and with broad daylight to aid them, a posse, armed to the teeth, scoured the full length of the tunnel.

The first discovery of importance was that a bag of nuggets had disappeared.

It had been left in a crevice between the rocks and was worth ten thousand dollars.

The next discovery was more horrible. Two of the miners were found lying in pools of blood, their throats cut from ear to ear, and their bodies destitute of clothing.

This explained how the two outlaws had left the tunnel. They had seized and murdered the miners in the darkness of the subterranean passage; then arraying themselves in their clothing and smearing their faces with mud, they had no doubt mingled with the other miners and passed out in safety. Once clear of the guard, they could do as they pleased, and thus they made good time in disappearing from the settlement.

How they conveyed the nuggets from the tunnel no one ever knew, although the miners spent a great deal of time and energy in conjecturing.

Jesse James had proven himself once more to be the greatest rascal unhung, and his visit to the Constock was handed down to history.

The various sheriffs went back to their counties sadder and wiser men, and the three detectives shook their heads solemnly over the seemingly hopeless task before them.

"We'll stay here till Star gets well and then try again," Davis decided. "That fellow must be put out of the way, and it's our duty to do it! I'll never give up if it takes me a lifetime!"

"I'm in it as long as you are, old man," responded Denny.

"Ridding the world of its most vicious criminals is a great work, my boy," laughed Davis. "If you wear Jesse James' scalp at your belt every girl's creation will love you! I prophesy that success in that direction will be success in love, old fellow!"

But the capturing of the notorious bandit was not an easy undertaking, as these three clever Pinkerton men found to their sorrow.

TO BE CONTINUED.

YOUR OPINIONS OF FAMOUS MEN.

Grand Prize Contest



**22 VALUABLE PRIZES
GIVEN AWAY.**

Here is a chance for every reader of **JESSE JAMES WEEKLY**.

Boys, you have all heard of the plucky little Kansan who has been making himself famous on the other side of the world.

What do you think of him?

What characteristics do you see in his face?

What has he done, anyway?

What do you think is the best thing he ever did?

The boys who can best answer such questions applying to any famous American, known for his brave deeds, will win handsome prizes.

Here is the plan of one of the most novel contests ever placed before the American boys.

Look up what interesting facts you can find about any famous American. Then write them out in your own words, stating your own opinion of him, his appearance, and the particular achievement which pleases you the most. The first prize will be awarded to the person sending in the most interesting and best written article; the next best will win the second prize, and so on. It makes no difference how short they are, but no contribution must be longer than 500 words.

LOOK AT THE PRIZES.

TWO FIRST PRIZES

The two who send us the most interesting and best written articles will each receive a first-class Camera, complete with achromatic lens, and loaded with six exposures each. Absolutely ready for use. For square pictures $3\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$ inches; capacity six exposures without reloading; size of camera $4\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ inches; weight 15 ounces; well made, covered with grain leather and handsomely finished.

FIVE SECOND PRIZES

The five who send us the next best articles will each receive a "Sterling" Magic Lantern Outfit, together with 72 admission tickets and a large show bill. Each lantern is 10 inches high, 4 inches in diameter, with a $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch plano-complex condensing lens and a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch double complex objective lens. Uses kerosene oil only.

FIVE THIRD PRIZES

The five who send us the next best articles will each receive a Handsome Pearl Handled Knife. These knives have each four blades of the best English steel, hardened and tempered. The handle is pearl, the lining brass, and the bolsters German silver.

For ten next best descriptions, ten sets of the latest and most entertaining Puzzles and Novelties on the market, numbering three puzzles each, including Uncle Isaac's Pawnshop Puzzle; the Magic Marble Puzzle and the Demon Outfit.

This Contest closes December 1. All contributions must be in by that date.

SEND IN YOUR ARTICLES AT ONCE, BOYS.

We are going to publish all of the best ones during the progress of the Contest.

We will have to reserve to ourselves the right of judging which article has the most merit, but our readers know that they may depend upon Street & Smith, and on their absolute fairness and justice in conducting Contests. This one will be no exception to the rule.

REMEMBER!

Whether your contribution wins a prize or not, it stands a good chance of being published, together with the name of the writer.

To become a contestant for the prize you must cut out the **Character Contest Coupon**, printed in this issue. Fill it out properly, and send it to **JESSE JAMES WEEKLY**, care of Street & Smith, 238 William Street, New York City, together with your article. No contribution will be considered that does not have this coupon accompanying it.

COUPON.

"JESSE JAMES WEEKLY" CHARACTER CONTEST No. 1.

Date.....1901

Name

City or Town.....

State

CHARACTER PRIZE CONTEST.

During the progress of the Prize Character Contest this department will be devoted to the publication of the best articles sent in by the contestants.
Here are some of the best ones received this week.

A Martyr of the Revolution.

(By Ted Williams, Albany, N. Y.)

The case of Nathan Hale, one of the earliest martyrs of the War of the Revolution, was one of the saddest in the history of the United States. He was a graduate of Yale, and when war broke out he joined the Connecticut troops and hastened to Boston. He was at the battle of Bunker Hill, and continued with the army under the command of Washington until the following year. He took part in the battle near Brooklyn, and was with the American army when it retreated from Long Island.

Hale was then appointed a captain in a body of soldiers called Congress' Own, that assumed a sort of body guardianship to the commander-in-chief.

While the American army was on Harlem Heights and the great body of the British army was still on Long Island, Washington was very anxious to find out the exact condition of the enemy's forces.

He applied to Colonel Knowlton for some one to go as a spy into the British camp.

Captain Hale volunteered for the service, and bearing instructions from Washington, he crossed Long Island Sound from the Connecticut shore, visited the British camps, made notes and sketches, unsuspected, and was about to embark from Huntington to Connecticut when he was discovered and exposed, it is said, by a Tory relative, and was made a prisoner.

He was taken to Sir William Howe's headquarters at Turtle Bay, confined in Beekman's green house in the garden until morning, and then, without the form of a regular trial, was handed over to the brutal provost marshal in New York for execution as a spy.

That wretch would not even allow Hale to have the company of a clergyman, and he even destroyed the letters which the victim had written to his mother and sisters during the night.

Surrounded by jeering soldiers, he was hanged like a dog upon an apple tree, and his body was buried in a grave beneath its shadow.

Hale's last words were: "I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country."

The disgraceful treatment of Hale by the British made them more hated than ever.

Later, when the British spy, Andre, was captured by the Americans, General Washington was appealed to to spare him from death, but Washington reminded them how they had treated Nathan Hale, and he said Andre must die. And that order was carried out.

George Washington.

(By Malcolm Lehman, Lee, Mass.)

George Washington was born at Mt. Vernon, Virginia. He was a great hero on water as well as on land but on land especially. He wrote the Constitution. He conquered England. One of his manœuvres was at Trenton, N. J., when Cornwallis thought that he had him and said, "We have the old fox and will bag him in the morning."

But Washington put wood on the fires to deceive the British, and it did. He marched in a roundabout way and surprised the British rear guard at Trenton and captured 3,000 small arms and ammunition and 1,000 prisoners.

Unlike some men, he never got discouraged, and so of course, won. Washington had to see many a poor soldier among the Continentals looking with envy on the fine uniforms of the British and on the happy times the British were having. But there was a good time coming for the "Father of his Country."

I call Washington an honorable, beloved and trusted hero. People could then and now, even in pictures, see honor, courage and truth in his face. He was a firm believer in God, and when he took the oath of President of the United States he said, "So help me, God."

It touched the hearts of everybody so that they cheered, and cheered and cheered for eight minutes.

In his younger days Washington was an expert surveyor, and surveyed over 100 miles of Lord Fairfax land.

He suffered many hardships during his life, but he bore them like a hero.

Once he was riding his beloved horse in the battle

Cowpens, and it was killed by a bullet. It struck the noble animal between the eyes and it reeled and fell dead. Washington had a surgeon cut off a lock of the horse's mane as a keepsake.

Washington was the greatest hero on land, and saver of the Union as Captain Paul Jones was the saver of the navy on the sea. Washington was granted his dying wish, which was to be buried on the land where he had so often hunted, and played, and in sight of the old homestead.

Commodore Oliver H. Perry.

(By Arthur Watt, Chicago, Ill.)

I have chosen Oliver Perry for my subject. War with England had broken out. A fleet commanded by Admiral Barclay, a veteran of Trafalgar, was supposed to be in the Great Lakes. Perry built vessels from trees growing along the shores of Lake Erie.

He managed to arm nine vessels, carrying in all fifty-four guns. The British fleet with six vessels had sixty-three guns. Perry had never witnessed a naval battle, but with true Yankee pluck engaged the enemy and compelled him to surrender. Perry fought so fiercely that the enemy concentrated their fire upon his flagship, the Lawrence. Eight men only were left, and calling these about him he rowed to the Niagara.

Shot and shell rained about the gallant little band, but they reached the Niagara in safety. About half an hour later one of the British ships hauled down her flag, and her example was soon followed by the others. Perry wrote to General Harrison, "We have met the enemy, and they are ours; two ships, two brigs, one sloop and one schooner. Yours with respect, O. H. Perry."

A Famous Patriot.

(By Charles White, Toledo, Ohio.)

I have read of your prize character contest and have written an article on Benjamin Franklin which I enclose.

Everybody knows who Benjamin Franklin was. But although his fame as an American patriot during the Revolutionary War is greater than his fame as a writer, I like him best for his writings. I think "Poor Richard's Almanack" is simply fine, and I love to read the homely maxims and proverbs which he wrote for it.

He knew how to prove his points, too. I remember reading of the way he proved that lightning was just common electricity. He sent up an iron pointed kite one day when a thunder storm was coming up and held it by a silk thread, attached to a long hempen cone. To the silk end was fastened an iron key, and when the cloud passed over he touched the key with his knuckles, and received a spark. It was a bold but successful ex-

periment. He immediately applied the discovery to a practical use by showing that pointed iron rods, extending from a distance above the highest part of a house to the ground, would prevent the house from being struck by lightning, by carrying it to the ground. Thus it was that the lightning rod was invented.

One time when my father took me to Philadelphia he showed me the place where Franklin was buried. It is in the burial ground of Christ Church, Philadelphia, and the inscription on his tomb was written by Franklin himself. It reads just like some of his other quaint sayings. Following is the inscription:

BENJAMIN
and
DEBORAH } FRANKLIN
1790.

The body of Benjamin Franklin, Printer, Like the cover of an old Book, Its contents torn out, and stripped of its lettering and gilding, Lies here, food for worms. But the work shall not be lost. For it will (as he believed) appear once more, In a new and more elegant edition, Revised and corrected by THE AUTHOR.

The Life of Washington.

(By George Consolvo, Norfolk, Va.)

I submit to you the following article about George Washington, as he, being the "Father of our Country," I think that he should be one of the first American heroes written about. At the age of twenty-one Washington was selected by Governor Dinwiddie to visit the hostile French and Indians to try and induce them to withdraw from the frontier and make terms of peace. His journey lay through a wilderness infested by wild beasts and savages. He arrived and returned in safety from Fort Du Quesne. But peace was not desired by the red men, and it was necessary to raise a troop of soldiers to repel the murderous invaders. George Washington was presented with the commission of colonel, and he was put in command of the troops. He marched with the troops to Great Meadows, where they erected a fort and named it Fort Necessity. Here reinforcements came, swelling his little force to 400. While at the fort the French and Indians to the number of 1,500 attacked the fort with great fury, but were repulsed.

This battle occurred July 4, 1754. A happy prelude to the glorious fourth of 1776. The following year Washington and a hundred brave Virginians saved the remnants of Braddock's army from total destruction. In June, 1775, Washington was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the American armies. Early in March, 1776, Washington planted his troops before Boston, where the British troops under the command of Lord Howe were

concentrated. A few days later he compelled Howe to evacuate the town.

In July General Howe landed several miles below New York with 24,000 men. In the latter part of August the troops stationed at Brooklyn, under command of General Sullivan, were attacked and defeated. A few days later General Washington effected a retreat and landed his troops in New York. But they were compelled to evacuate soon after and retire to White Plains. Here they were attacked by the British, who were defeated. On the 25th of December, Washington crossed the Delaware amid floating ice to Trenton and defeated the British, and then pushing on to Princeton, defeated them there.

The British defeated General Washington in the battles of Brandywine and Germantown, but they were dearly bought victories.

In October, 1781, Washington and his army defeated Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown. Thus gaining the victory that gave America her freedom.

Washington was elected President and served from 1789 to 1797, and then retired to Mount Vernon, where he died on the 14th of December, 1799.

First in peace, first in war, first in the hearts of his countrymen.

General Custer's Last Fight.

(By Charles A. Draus, Dushore, Pa.)

I think General Custer was a very brave man. He was sent forward with the seventh cavalry to discover the whereabouts of the Sioux Indians. He found them encamped in a large village extending for nearly three miles along the left bank of the Little Horn under their great chieftain, Sitting Bull. On the 25th of June, General Custer, without waiting for reinforcements, charged with his division into the Indian town, and was immediately surrounded by thousands of yelling warriors. Of the details of the struggle that ensued very little is known, for General Custer and every man of his command fell in the fight. The conflict equaled, if it did not surpass in desperation and disaster, any other Indian battle ever fought in America. Of the seventh cavalry, there were 261 killed and fifty-two wounded.

Perry's Victory.

(By Edward Borucki, So. Chicago, Ill.)

Oliver Hazard Perry is my hero. He was a man of nerve. It is said that he and a gang of ship builders chopped down his timbers in order to build some ships. Only nine ships were made, for there wasn't enough wood for more, so Perry named his ship Lawrence, in honor of a gallant American captain who was killed in battle. Then he sailed with his fleet in search of the

British squadron. He soon spied them near Sandusky, Ohio.

When yet quite a distance he flung in the breeze the blue flag, and on it was the dying order of Lawrence to his men, "Don't give up the ship." He then sailed to meet the enemy and fought two large British ships till the Lawrence was a wreck. Then, with his flag in his arms, he jumped in a boat amid shots and bullets. He was rowed to the Niagara and once on deck he again attacked the British ships, broke their line, and captured the entire fleet. "We have met the enemy," he said, "and they are ours—two ships, two brigs, one schooner and one sloop."

Perry's victory was a grand one, for it gave him the command of Lake Erie and enabled him to carry Harrison's soldiers over to Canada. These two victories regained everything that had been lost by the surrender of Hull.

At the Battle of New Orleans.

(By George M. Hogan, Marlton, New Jersey.)

The person of whom I am going to write about is Andrew Jackson, the hero of New Orleans. Jackson had about 5,000 men, and the British had about 8,000. When Jackson reached New Orleans, he saw that if the British entered the city they would have to cross a deep ditch, so the men set to work digging the ditch deeper and built a high bank on one side of it. The British tried again and again to cross the ditch, but the Americans cut them down like a farmer cuts his grass with a scythe. But just before the fight began, Jackson walked along the line and said, "Stand to your guns."

"Give it to them, boys," he said, as the fight started and the boys did give it to them. In less than half an hour the battle was over and Jackson had won the victory. The Americans lost eight killed, the enemy lost two thousand. Later, Jackson was made President of the United States.

CONTEST NOTES.

Only two more weeks, boys, before the contest closes. Have you all sent in your articles?

There is still a chance to win a prize. Don't miss it.

Several of the contestants have sent in articles about the same character. They are published side by side. Pick the winner, boys, by reading each article.

The winner's names are going to be published in black type. Wouldn't you like to see your name among them? You may if you get your sketch in promptly.

A. W., Chicago, Ill.—Please send us your street address.

Hunting and Trapping Department.

This department is brimful of information and ideas of interest to the young trapper and hunter. Write us if you have any questions to ask concerning these subjects, and they will be answered in a special column. Address all communications to the "Hunting and Trapping Department."

The Humming Bird Trap.

One of the most ingenious uses to which bird lime is said to have been applied, with success, is in the capture of humming birds. The lime in this instance is made simply by chewing a few grains of wheat in the mouth until a gum is formed. It is said that by spreading this on the inside opening of the long white lily or trumpet creeper blossom, the capture of a humming bird is almost certain, and he will never be able to leave the flower after once fairly having entered the opening. There can be no doubt but that this is perfectly practicable, and we recommend it to our readers.

The object in making the bird lime from wheat consists in the fact that this is more easily removed from the feathers than the other kinds.

We would not wish our readers to infer from this that a humming bird might be captured or kept alive, for, of all birds, they are the most fragile and delicate, and would die of fright, if from nothing else. They are chiefly used for ornamental purposes, and may be caught in a variety of ways. A few silk nooses hung about the flowers where the birds are seen to frequent, will sometimes succeed in ensnaring their tiny forms.

The blow gun is often used with good success, and the concussion from a gun loaded simply with powder, and aimed in the direction of the bird, will often stun it so that it will fall to the ground. If a strong stream of water be forced upon the little creature, as it is fluttering from flower to flower, the result is the same, as the feathers become so wet that it cannot fly.

A Duck Hunt.

This is the season for hunting ducks, and the boy who is lucky enough to own a shotgun can have some of the finest sport of the year by going on a duck hunt.

Here is the way some boys, accompanied by an old hunter and guide, named Vic, went on a duck hunt with successful results.

Note the way they managed. Their story is brimful of hints and suggestions to the young hunter.

"We had been in our trapping camp a week," they write, "when early on a cold, cloudy afternoon old Vic informed us that if we wanted some fine duck hunting we would never have a better chance.

"We proceeded at once to put our shotguns in order. Old Vic informed us that a boat was concealed on the shores of another lake, rather larger than the one by our camp. They were about a half a mile apart, and connected by a small stream.

"We can run down that into this lake, and so across to the camp, when we get ready to come back," Vic said, and in half an hour we had reached the lake, and had pulled from its hiding-place a neat canoe, capable of carrying three persons, and launched it at the edge of the lake.

"The water was alive with ducks: a pair here, and a flock there, but none near enough to warrant a shot.

"Some of us has got to stay on land, and the rest drive to 'em," said Vic. "Who'll it be?"

"I, for one," answered Jinx.

"And I, for another," said Will, whereupon Rex, Vic and I entered the boat and pushed from shore.

"Vic instructed Jinx to take his stand near the creek, while Will went farther up the lake, and then he took up the paddle and pushed the canoe through the beds of lilies that grew around the water's edge. Rex and myself were near the bow, with our double barrels all ready for work.

"Keep a sharp lookout," admonished Vic, "and take 'em as they rise from the water. They're all in a heap then, an' you'll kill more than you will when they're settin' still."

"We were nearing a large flock, perhaps a hundred or more, and when within a hundred yards they commenced moving gradually away from us.

"Seeing this, Vic paddled swiftly and silently, again cautioning us to keep a sharp lookout, as they would rise presently, and even as he spoke there were a few warning quacks, and then a noise like distant thunder, as they arose in a body from the water, and in a trice four loads of shot were plowing among them, and then Vic dropped his paddle, and as they circled overhead, took his chance. But they were too much scattered for his shot to do much execution, and both charges of his piece only resulted in a single pair falling. We paddled along then and proceeded to pick them up. The result was a 'baker's dozen,' all told.

"A splendid beginnin', boys," said old Vic, turning them over with satisfaction. "But you couldn't miss, they was so all-fired thick. They're fat as butter, too."

"The flock had been circling round over the lake, occasionally making feints to alight, and finally settling down under the woods close to the water's edge.

"Must be they're some'r near Will," Vic remarked, watching them. "Yes, there he goes!"

"The sound of Will's piece came echoing across the water, followed immediately by a second report in the direction of Jinx.

"Vic stood up in the stern of the boat, and, balancing himself with the paddle, looked down the lake.

"The boys are going in on their muscle, I guess. But they can't git no more shots there till we drive some down. I think we'd better go up around the next flock, and I shouldn't wonder if they'd come this way when we peppered into 'em."

"I changed places with him at the paddle and steered for a point a little to the right of a large flock nearly a half mile distant, spread out on the water, and looking like a low strip of land, so close were they together. As we passed along, half-a-dozen pairs of 'lightning divers' attracted our attention swimming around, and busy dressing their feathers in fancied security, a couple of dozen yards from the boat. Rex raised his gun.

"You can't hit 'em," said Vic, decidedly.

"Can't?" echoed Rex, in amazement, "at that distance off? Why?"

"Try it," said Vic, laconically.

"Rex took careful aim and fired, but to his unbounded astonishment, when the charge struck the water the ducks had disappeared!

"No use," said Vic, shaking his head. "There never was a charge of shot yet they couldn't dodge, blast 'em. Fine rifle powder and a bullet will fix them, though."

"I had tried it before to my satisfaction, and knew that old Vic was right, and, considerably chagrined, Rex reloaded his piece. As we approached the large flock they arose in a solid mass, and Vic and Rex poured in their fire.

"Boys! see the feathers fly!" shouted Vic, "an' see 'em squabble 'round on the water! I'll bet there's half-a-dozen there that ain't hurt a bit, only a wing broke. That's the beauty of takin' 'em as they rise. Here, you darn'd skunk!"

"This last apostrophe was addressed to a huge gray fellow, with a shirring head and curled-up tail, which had appeared remarkably lively as Vic went to grasp him, and had made a dive under the boat.

"The pesky critter," said Vic, leaning over and peering under, "no use paddlin'. He'll come up some'r."

"We sat still and scanned the water on every side, and in a moment his green shining head appeared a dozen yards distant.

"That's the way of 'em," said Vic, watching him. "We might chase him half a day 'thout catchin' him."

"He pulled his revolver from his belt, leveled it and fired, and in a minute after the duck was with the rest in the boat.

"We had bagged a goodly number, and from the repeated reports on shore, had no doubt the boys there had been pretty successful, so we pulled for the outlet.

"We had reached the bank and entered the mouth of the creek to await the boys, whom we had signaled to be there, when suddenly we heard Jinx's voice, echoing

under the leafy arches of the trees at the highest pitch of exasperation:

"Confound the thing! Here, Will, come along and help me out of this!"

"The sound came from overhead, and we looked around for an explanation of the mystery. We had it. There, about a dozen yards from where we sat, and suspended by the seat of his unmentionables to a broken limb of a tree, was Jinx, his long legs and arms flying around 'loose' in the air, and a decidedly owlish expression on his face, and then Will appeared walking along at a swinging pace, with a string of ducks in his hand, and, seeing Jinx, stopped, and leaning on his gun, began singing in a tragic voice:

"There was a lyre, 'tis said, which hung
High, waving in the summer air."

with an emphasis on the word lyre which caused Jinx to give an extra contortion.

"I'll wave you, you miserable heathen! Pony up there, and help a fellow in distress!"

"It's curious," continued Will, musingly, glancing toward us as he spoke, "what a slight thing will cause suspended animation. Make a sketch of him, Archie, it will illustrate the resistance of——"

"He never finished the sentence. Jinx made a superhuman effort, something tore, and the next instant he was gravitating earthward. He struck on all fours, and, springing up, began a frantic search for a big stick. Finding one at his hand, he reached after Will with such zeal and earnestness that that individual was forced to take refuge somewhere, and the boat being inaccessible, he made a flying leap and cleared the creek.

"Jinx halted on the bank, and threw down the cudgel, and finally joined in the laugh against himself.

"How in the Old Harry did you git in such a fix, anyhow?" asked Vic, as we gathered up our game.

"How much would you give to know?" retorted Jinx.

"Never mind, Jinx," said Will, patting him on the back, soothingly. "You shan't be bothered with questions."

"Jinx preserved a dignified silence till after we had reached camp, but under the influence of broiled duck and coffee he finally thawed and told us about it, how he had climbed a tree to look over the lake, and had lost his balance and fell, and had hung about five minutes when Will came along."

EXCHANGE COLUMN.

(Notice.—This column is free to all our readers. We cannot be responsible for transactions made through notices in this column. All offers must be strictly exchange offers, and no "for sale" advertisements, or exchanges of firearms, explosives, or dangerous or worthless articles will be printed. Address all communications for this column to "Exchange Column.")

Alex. Klein, 3 Orange street, Cleveland, Ohio, wants the exchange list of all exchangers. He has toys, story papers, etc.

James Parker, 241 Wilson avenue, Cleveland, Ohio, has a hand-inking press and two sets of type, script and fullface, with cards and ink, to exchange for a dynamo at least five or six inches high.

JESSE JAMES STORIES



Jesse James.

WE were the first publishers in the world to print the famous stories of the James Boys, written by that remarkable man, W. B. Lawson, whose name is a watchword with our boys. We have had many imitators, and in order that no one shall be deceived in accepting the spurious for the real, we are now publishing the best stories of the James Boys, by Mr. Lawson, in a New Library entitled "The Jesse James Stories," one of our big five-cent weeklies, and a sure winner with the boys. A number of issues have already appeared, and these which follow will be equally good; in fact, the best of their kind in the world.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, New York.

NICK CARTER STORIES



Nick Carter.

THE best known detective in the world is Nick Carter. Stories by this noted sleuth are issued regularly in "Nick Carter Weekly" (price five cents), and all his work is written for us.

It may interest the patrons and readers of the Nick Carter Series of Detective Stories to know that these famous stories will soon be produced upon the stage under unusually elaborate circumstances. Arrangements have just been completed between the publishers and Manager F. C. Whitney, to present the entire set of Nick Carter stories in dramatic form. The first play of the series will be brought out next fall.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, NEW YORK.

BUFFALO BILL STORIES

The only publication authorized by the Hon. Wm. F. Cody (Buffalo Bill).



Buffalo Bill.

WE were the publishers of the first story ever written of the famous and world-renowned Buffalo Bill, the great hero whose life has been one succession of exciting and thrilling incidents combined with great successes and accomplishments, all of which will be told in a series of grand stories which we are now placing before the American Boys. The popularity they have already obtained shows what the boys want, and is very gratifying to the publishers.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, New York.

DIAMOND DICK STORIES



Diamond Dick.

THE celebrated Diamond Dick stories can only be found in "Diamond Dick, Jr., the Boys' Best Weekly."

Diamond Dick and his son Bertie are the most unique and fascinating heroes of Western romance. The scenes, and many of the incidents, in these exciting stories are taken from real life. Diamond Dick stories are conceded to be the best stories of the West, and are all copyrighted by us. The weekly is the same size and price as this publication, with handsome illuminated cover. Price, five cents.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, New York.